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THE BIG PICTURE 50 MOVIES TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2016! **THE FINEST HOURS** THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN **HOW TO BE SINGLE** IF YOU'RE NOT HAVING FUN, YOU'RE NOT DOING IT RIGHT! **ANOMALISA** ANIMATED ANOMALY **KUNGFU PANDA 3** DON'T MESS WITH TIGRESS JOLIE **AND MORE...**
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We love February! Why? *Because we like you...*

Sorry, that's some (really, really) old Mickey Mouse Club kids' show closing theme that plays in my head on a cheery day when someone asks me, 'Why?' Or it's even verbalised when I'm too dumbfounded for an answer...

Part of the jingle goes like this:

*M-I-C – See you real soon
K-E-Y – Why? Because we like you
M-O-U-S-E...*

Google or YouTube it, and enjoy some vintage black-and-white goodness.

Of course, I'm also cheerily giving back (just to annoy) for a while now with, 'But why?' Thanks to another obscure product called *Frozen*, also from the House of the Rat... I mean, Mouse. All these bad influences, they should learn more from Quentin Tarantino...

I'm really good at digressing, aren't I?

Okay, February's our birthday; that's why we love the month! We're six! Yeah, man, we are old enough to learn new swear words! Just kidding... we already know all of them! The Chinese Lunar New Year falls on this month too! Just so you know, we are still eligible to collect red packets for another good decade or more... We accept cheques too, address somewhere on this page! ☺

This is also the month when we spring-clean and revamp our magazine a bit; see if you can spot the dirt, I mean, the changes and additions.

February is also the month when we cherry-pick the best of the year's upcoming movies. So don't go squandering your red-packet takings just yet, 'til you've gone through our list and subscribed to our magazine for another year or so. Why, *because we like you...*

The Oscars are happening towards the end of the month too! With all the #OscarsSoWhite controversy going around (read our news bites inside, tsk), we're pretty sure there'll be some colourful languages flying around and some serious 'acts' of compassion at this year's telecast. So be sure to stock up on the popcorn and those yummy pineapple tarts for an interesting reality show – I mean, awards show. :)

Oh, Valentine's Day falls on this month too, so there you go: we said we like you first, so don't go complaining you're unloved!

Now, go clean your room! But... why?



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CONGRATULATIONS F*** MAGAZINE
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THE BIG PICTURE

50 MOVIES TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2016!



J-Law in the director's chair for *Delirium*

There's no stopping Jennifer Lawrence's continued conquest of Hollywood and the actress will now move behind the camera to make her directorial debut. "I have wanted to direct as long as I've wanted to act. I just don't talk about it because I'd rather just do it," Lawrence told *Entertainment Weekly*. The project she has picked to helm is *Project Delirium*. The film will be based on a 2002 New Yorker magazine article by Raffi Khatchadourian about the military career of Army Col. James S. Ketchum, a psychiatrist who conducted experiments in the field of 'mental warfare' during the Cold War. While it has been described as a "comedy", the subject matter is very dark indeed. "It's funny, I've wanted to direct since I was 16 and always thought I should start making steps towards that. If I had tried to do it earlier, I wouldn't have been ready. Now I actually feel ready," the 25-year-old star continued. Lawrence is not planning to act in the film.

Only Harrison Ford should play Indy, says Spielberg

The boss has spoken. If Steven Spielberg has his way – which is likely because he is Steven Spielberg, after all – nobody will replace Harrison Ford in the iconic role of Indiana Jones. "I don't think anyone could replace Harrison as Indy," the director said in no uncertain terms. "It's certainly not my intention to ever have another actor step into his shoes in the way there have been many actors that have played Spider-Man or Batman. There is only going to be one actor playing Indiana Jones and that's Harrison Ford." After Disney's acquisition of Lucasfilm and the official greenlighting of more *Star Wars* films, it seemed natural that an *Indiana Jones* reboot would be in the works, with Chris Pratt's name being brought up more than once. Of course, we've learnt to never say never. If you want to get technical, other actors have played Indy at different stages in his life: River Phoenix in the prologue of *Last Crusade* and Sean Patrick Flannery, Cory Carrier and George Hall in *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*.



Rebecca Ferguson accepts another *Mission*

One of 2015's breakout stars was Swedish actress Rebecca Ferguson, who played the enigmatic undercover agent Ilsa Faust in *Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation*. Ferguson has signed on to reprise the role in *Mission: Impossible 6*, which would make her the first *Mission: Impossible* leading lady to get a second go-round. Thandie Newton, Maggie Q and Paula Patton were all one-and-done, and Michelle Monaghan only made a brief cameo in *Ghost Protocol* after playing Ethan Hunt's wife, Julia, in the third film. Ferguson has become a very hot property with roles in *The Girl On The Train*, *Florence Foster Jenkins* and *The Snowman*. *Rogue Nation* director Christopher McQuarrie is also returning for the sixth film, which is set to commence shooting in August 2016.

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More Autobot team-ups for Mark Wahlberg with *Transformers 5*

Mark Wahlberg, who played inventor Cade Yeager in *Transformers: Age Of Extinction*, has confirmed that he is attached to the fifth installment of the mega-franchise. While promoting the comedy *Daddy's Home*, Wahlberg answered, "Uh, yes" when a Brazilian reporter asked if he would be returning. While the critical reception for *Age Of Extinction* was negative to mixed at best, it was generally agreed that Wahlberg was a step up from previous lead Shia LaBeouf. With director Michael Bay back in the mix as well, *Transformers 5* is set to blast its way into cinemas sometime in 2017.



Renner rolls with the punches for *Undefeated: The Rocky Marciano Story*

It may be Captain America who's known for going a few rounds with the punching bag, but now it's Hawkeye's turn. Jeremy Renner is attached to play legendary heavyweight boxer Rocky Marciano in an upcoming biopic. Born Rocco Francis Marchegiano in 1923, Marciano holds the honour of being the only heavyweight champion to retire from his professional career undefeated, with a record of 49 wins. The film will follow Marciano from his childhood until his death in a plane crash in 1969. Samuel Franco and Evan Kilgore are writing the screenplay, which is currently seeking a director. To draw another Marvel Cinematic Universe connection, Marciano was portrayed by Jon Favreau (Tony Stark's chauffeur, Happy Hogan/director of *Iron Man 1* and 2) in a 1999 TV movie.

Benedict Cumberbatch to foil Nazis with illusions

After playing the Sorcerer Supreme, Benedict Cumberbatch will remain in the realm of magic for *The War Magician*.

Cumberbatch has signed on to portray Jasper Maskelyne, a real-life illusionist who claimed to have led a covert British intelligence unit known as the 'magic gang' during the Second World War. Maskelyne experimented with camouflage techniques

and allegedly developed elaborate ruses involving disappearing cities and vanishing soldiers. Most historians agree that Maskelyne greatly exaggerated his contributions to the war effort and that he fabricated the entertaining stories. Cumberbatch has proven that he can play "eccentric" well, so the role does seem to suit him. The screenplay is written by Gary Whitta (*The Book Of Eli*, *Star Wars: Rogue One*), adapted from David Fisher's biography of Maskelyne.



Kurt Russell as Star Lord Sr. in *Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 2?*

Kurt Russell – Snake Plissken/Jack Burton himself – is reportedly director James Gunn's No. 1 pick to play Peter Quill's long-lost father in the *Guardians Of The Galaxy* sequel. The true identity of Peter Quill's father, who is of alien origin, was set up to be a major component of any follow-up film. Gunn has stated that the film will not abide by Quill's established parentage in the comics, in which his father is the extremely political Emperor Jason of Spartax. Speaking with Josh Horowitz for the podcast *Happy Sad Confused*, Russell admitted that he has yet to see the first *Guardians* film, saying, "I don't know anything about it. I'm one of the four idiots that's never seen it. Many times I've heard 'That's a really fun movie, a really good movie [with] great characters.' I don't know it." However, he did confirm in the same interview that he has talked with Gunn on the phone so, while it's not yet written in stone, it seems entirely plausible that he would be cast. *Guardians Of The Galaxy: Vol. 2* is set for a May 2017 release.

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Cate Blanchett rocking into *Thor: Ragnarok*

The Marvel Cinematic Universe is adding yet another Oscar winner to its ranks with the addition of Cate Blanchett to *Thor: Ragnarok*. While it is unclear what role the actress is circling, The Hollywood Reporter's source said Marvel was searching for a "badass female" to add to the film. Early fan speculation raised the possibility of Blanchett playing two prominent badass blondes, Valkyrie and Enchantress, but it now seems that she might be playing Hela – the nefarious ruler of Hel who may be in cahoots with Tom Hiddleston's amoral Loki. Blanchett is currently a very strong awards contender for her turn in Todd Haynes' lesbian romance, *Carol*. She was earlier rumoured to be joining the solo *Wonder Woman* movie. This comes on the heels of Marvel's hiring of TV writer Stephany Folsom to polish the script written by Craig Kyle and Christopher Yost. Directed by Taika Waititi, the God of Thunder's third solo outing will strike in July 2017.



Katherine Waterston blasts off into the unknown in *Alien: Covenant*

Alien: Covenant, director Ridley Scott's sequel to *Prometheus*, has secured its female lead in the form of Katherine Waterston. Waterston will play the lead role of Daniels, who journeys to a distant alien planet on board the colony spacecraft, *Covenant*. The ship's crew believe that they have stumbled upon an undiscovered paradise, but it is really a treacherous world where the only known inhabitant is David 8 (Michael Fassbender), the robotic lone survivor of the doomed *Prometheus* mission. Waterston just starred opposite Fassbender in *Steve Jobs*, in which she played Jobs' ex-girlfriend, Chrisann Brennan. Rebecca Ferguson was reportedly being considered for the role. At this point, it is not known what has become of Noomi Rapace's Dr. Elizabeth Shaw, the last woman standing at the end of *Prometheus*. *Alien: Covenant* is planned as the first entry in a new trilogy of films that will bridge the events of *Prometheus* and *Alien*. *Alien: Covenant* hatches in October 2017.

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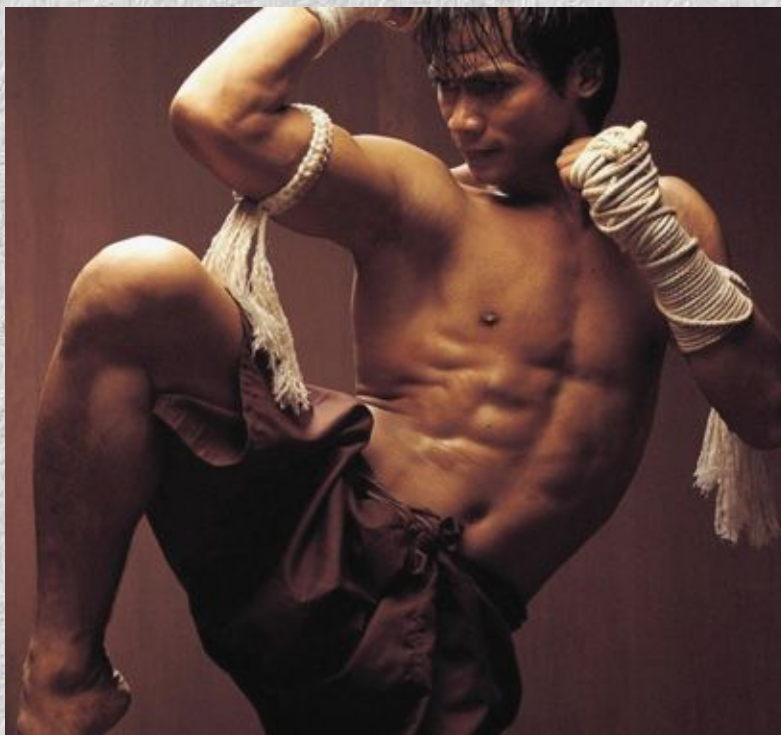
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xXx 3 ropes in Jet Li, Tony Jaa and Deepika Padukone

It's been a long time coming for the third film in the xXx series, but things are finally getting into gear with some casting announcements. *xXx: The Return Of Xander Cage* will see Vin Diesel back in the title role with Samuel L. Jackson returning as spymaster Augustus Gibbons. Joining them are not one but two international martial artists/ action-movie stars, Jet Li and Tony Jaa. Popular Bollywood starlet Deepika Padukone will play the female lead. UFC featherweight champion Conor McGregor is also set to appear in the movie. Directing the threequel is D.J. Caruso (*Eagle Eye*, *I Am Number Four*), succeeding Rob Cohen and Lee Tamahori. The first xXx film was released in 2002, pitched as a hip extreme sports-tinged rival to the *Bond* series. Diesel did not return for the 2005 sequel, *xXx: State Of The Union*, which starred Ice Cube instead. *The Final Chapter: The Death Of Xander Cage*, a short film included as a DVD extra with *State Of The Union*, showed Xander's death in between the two films, so perhaps that was just a body double, or it will be ignored entirely.



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Harry Potter stars bid Alan Rickman farewell

On 14 January 2016, just days after the passing of David Bowie, Alan Rickman died, also aged 69 and also from cancer. The English actor and director was a titan of the stage and screen, beginning his career as part of the Royal Shakespeare Company and going on to portray many memorable characters. Rickman often played antagonists and is best remembered for his breakout role as the villainous Hans Gruber in *Die Hard*; and Severus Snape, the complex, morally ambiguous, eventually sympathetic character key to the *Harry Potter* saga. Rickman's varied screen credits also include *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves*; *Love, Actually*; *Perfume: Story Of A Murderer*; *Galaxy Quest* and *Sense And Sensibility*. Tributes from *Harry Potter* fans and fellow cast members alike poured in following Rickman's passing.

"Alan Rickman is undoubtedly one of the greatest actors I will ever work with. He is also, one of the loyalest (sic) and most supportive people I've ever met in the film industry," Daniel Radcliffe wrote. "Film sets and theatre stages are all far poorer for the loss of this great actor and man."

Emma Watson made several posts in tribute to Rickman on social media, saying, "I feel so lucky to have worked and spent time with such a special man and actor. I'll really miss our conversations." One of the posts was a quote from Rickman, which read, "There is nothing wrong with a man being a feminist. I think it is to our mutual advantage."

Bonnie Wright, who played Ginny Weasley, posted a photo of Rickman as Snape on Instagram, with the caption: "Alan. The energy shifted every time you walked onto set. You were an inspiration to us all. RIP"

Author J. K. Rowling said on Twitter: "There are no words to express how shocked and devastated I am to hear of Alan Rickman's death. He was a magnificent actor & a wonderful man."

The farewell letter that Rickman wrote after he played Snape for the final time in *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2* in 2011, published in *Empire Magazine*, has been making the rounds. In the letter, he mused about how quickly the series' stars have grown up over the ten years spent making the Potter movies. "It is an ancient need to be told stories. But the story needs a great storyteller. Thanks for all of it, Jo," Rickman wrote, referring to Rowling.

He will indeed be truly, madly, deeply missed.





Emma Stone sees spots as Cruella de Vil

Emma Stone is in early negotiations to star as notable Public Enemy No. 1 to Dalmatian puppies everywhere, Cruella de Vil, in a spin-off movie of the same name. *Cruella de Vil* will function as an origin story for the notorious Disney villain. Screenwriter Kelly Marcel (*Saving Mr. Banks*, *50 Shades Of Grey*) is rewriting the script, originally penned by Aline Brosh McKenna (*The Devil Wears Prada*, *27 Dresses*). It remains to be seen if Cruella will be made into a more sympathetic figure, as with Maleficent, or if Stone will get to revel in full-on delicious evil. Actresses who have played Cruella in live-action form include Glenn Close in two films, Victoria Smurfit in TV show *Once Upon A Time* and Wendy Raquel Robinson in the Disney Channel original movie, *Descendants*.



Star Wars Episode VIII gets postponed by seven months

To paraphrase Yoda, “always in motion, release dates are”. *Star Wars Episode VIII*, the subtitle of which has yet to be officially revealed, was set to open in May 2017, just like *Episodes I* through *VI*. We now know that the release date has been delayed to December. This continues the recent pattern of *Star Wars* movies opening just before Christmas, with last year’s *The Force Awakens* and this year’s *Rogue One* both having mid-December release dates. This is no cause for alarm though, since *The Force Awakens* was also initially scheduled for a May release and was postponed to December – a move that director J. J. Abrams was grateful for, saying it allowed the production more time to work on the movie. *Episode VIII*’s director Rian Johnson will now also have an extra seven months to complete the film. Disney has moved *Pirates Of The Caribbean: Dead Man Tell No Tales* from July 7 to May 26, taking up the spot previously held by *Episode VIII*.

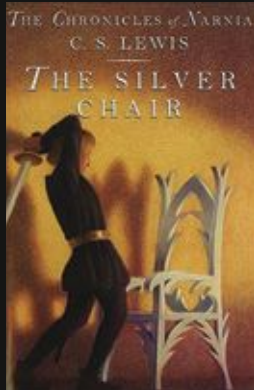
So long, Starman: David Bowie passes away

On 10 January 2016, two days after his 69th birthday, musician, performer, actor and all-round cultural icon David Bowie died from liver cancer. Bowie, born David Robert Jones, is considered by many as an innovative trailblazer who was a prominent figure in the glam rock movement as his alter-ego, Ziggy Stardust. Outside of music, Bowie had several memorable roles in films. His first major film role was that of Thomas Jerome Newton, an alien visitor hailing from a distant dying planet, in 1976’s *The Man Who Fell To Earth*. He starred opposite Catherine Deneuve and Susan Sarandon in 1983’s *The Hunger* and was approached to play Bond villain Max Zorin in *A View To A Kill*, a role that ultimately went to Christopher Walken. His most memorable role is arguably that of Jareth the Goblin King in Jim Henson’s 1986 cult fantasy film, *Labyrinth*, which he followed with a turn as Pontius Pilate in Martin Scorsese’s *Last Temptation Of The Christ*. 2006 saw Bowie portray Nikola Tesla in Christopher Nolan’s *The Prestige*. Bowie is survived by film director Duncan Jones, his son with first wife Angela; and Alexandria Zahra Jones, his daughter with his second wife, Iman.

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA THE SILVER CHAIR

Narnia reboots with The Silver Chair

The Chronicles Of Narnia, the classic children's fantasy novel series written by C.S. Lewis, has spawned three live-action film adaptations. A fourth film has been in the works for some time, and when Collider asked producer Mark Gordon if it would be a continuation of the existing film series, Gordon replied, "No, it's all going to be a brand new franchise. All original. All original characters, different directors, and an entire new team that this is coming from." It makes sense that *The Silver Chair* would be a reboot, since the fourth book in the series is set decades after the events of *Voyage Of The Dawn Treader*. The novel marks the first appearance of Jill Pole in the book series; the character was mentioned but not seen at the end of the *Dawn Treader* movie. In June 2015, screenwriter David Magee (*Life Of Pi*, *Finding Neverland*) tweeted that he had completed a draft of the film's screenplay. With this official update from Gordon, the revival of the *Narnia* franchise should be well underway.



Deadpool banned in China

China's film censors are intent on silencing the Merc With A Mouth. *Deadpool* has been denied permission to screen in the country due to its violence, nudity and graphic language, elements which have comic-book fans around the world excited to see it. China is the world's second-largest film market, but imposes strict import quotas on foreign films and exercises stringent censorship. Unlike practically every country in the world, China does not have a film rating system that carries age recommendations in a restrictive capacity, meaning movies are either suitable for all ages or banned. While Chinese authorities often work with Hollywood studios to create edits of films that appease the censors, cutting the objectionable content out of *Deadpool* was not possible without affecting major plot points.



China's richest man buys Legendary Pictures

Real estate development and movie theatre operator juggernaut Dalian Wanda Group acquired Hollywood studio Legendary Pictures in a USD \$3.5 billion deal. Legendary co-financed films such as *Jurassic World*, *The Dark Knight*, *Straight Outta Compton*, *Godzilla* and *Pacific Rim*. Dalian Wanda is headed by Wang Jianlin, China's richest man. This is the largest Hollywood-China deal in the film industry to date, and expands Dalian Wanda's reach in the movie business after it previously acquired the AMC cinema chain, the second-largest in America. Film producer Thomas Tull, Legendary's Chief Executive, will remain in his position. This opens the gateway for the studio to make more films in China and it will now be easier to get them released in the country, which has foreign film import quotas imposed by its government.

Stars call for Oscar boycott

When the nominees for the 88th Academy Awards were announced, many were quick to point out that – for the second year in a row – there were no people of colour nominated in the four acting categories. "#OscarsSoWhite", the hashtag that was started by writer/activist April Reign and which trended last year, resurfaced again this year. The lack of diversity in the acting nominations has become an industry talking point.



Some pundits are of the view that Will Smith was snubbed for a nomination for his performance in *Concussion*; his wife, Jada Pinkett Smith, has officially called for a boycott of the ceremony. Director Spike Lee, whose film *Chi-Raq* was not nominated, endorsed the boycott. Will Smith himself said he would be joining his wife in not attending the show. Idris Elba, David Oyelowo, Lupita Nyong'o and George Clooney have also spoken out against the Academy, while not officially endorsing the boycott. On the other hand, Whoopi Goldberg and Will Smith's *Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air* co-star Janet Hubert were critical of the move.



Stuck in an awkward position is this year's host Chris Rock, who is facing pressure to back out of the ceremony but, at press time, is still scheduled to host.

An *L.A. Times* study in 2012 revealed that 94% of Oscar voters who choose the nominees were white and 77% were male. Blacks represented 2% of the Academy, with even fewer Latino members. Cheryl Boone Isaacs, the first African-American woman to be the president of the Academy, says the Oscars will review its recruitment process.

Aaron Sorkin,
Best Screenplay -
Motion Picture
for "Steve Jobs"



Alejandro Inarritu
and Leonardo
Dicaprio, Best
Director - Motion
Picture and Best
Performance By An
Actor In A Motion
Picture - Drama, for
"The Revenant"



Jennifer Lawrence,
Best Actress In A
Motion Picture -
Musical Or
Comedy for "Joy"



Kate Winslet,
Best Performance
By An Actress In A
Motion Picture for
"Steve Jobs"



Matt Damon, Best
Performance By An
Actor In A Motion
Picture - Musical Or
Comedy for
"The Martian"



Oscar Isaac,
Best Performance By
An Actor In A Limited
Series Or Motion
Picture for "
Show Me A Hero"



Pete Doctor and Jonas
Rivera of "Inside Out",
Best Motion Picture -
Animated



Sam Smith
(@samsmithworld)
and Jimmy Napes
(@jimmynapes) of
"Writing's On The
Wall" from "Spectre",
Best Original Song -
Motion Picture



Sylvester Stallone,
Best Performance
By An Actor In A
Supporting Role -
Motion Picture
for "Creed"



73rd Golden Globe Awards: Full list of winners

On 10 January 2016, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association handed out the Golden Globes, with a very tipsy Ricky Gervais returning to deliver the zingers after a three-year break – and sharing an extended awkward moment with Mel Gibson. *The Revenant* and *The Martian* dominated the night, with Sylvester Stallone enjoying comeback kid status with a Best Supporting Actor win for *Creed*. Yes, *The Martian* is a funny movie, but it isn't exactly a "comedy", everyone's heard all the puzzled jokes. Though it had the most nominations of any film, Todd Haynes' period romantic drama *Carol* left empty-handed, as did Tom McCarthy's *Spotlight*. Here's the list of all the winners and nominees:

Best motion picture, drama

The Revenant – **winner**
Mad Max: Fury Road
Carol
Room
Spotlight

Best motion picture, musical or comedy

The Martian – **winner**
Joy
Spy
The Big Short
The Martian
Trainwreck

Best performance by an actress in a motion picture, drama

Brie Larson, *Room* – **winner**
Saoirse Ronan, *Brooklyn*
Cate Blanchett, *Carol*
Rooney Mara, *Carol*
Alicia Vikander, *The Danish Girl*

Best performance by an actress in a motion picture, musical or comedy

Jennifer Lawrence, *Joy* – **winner**
Melissa McCarthy, *Spy*
Amy Schumer, *Trainwreck*
Maggie Smith, *The Lady in the Van*
Lily Tomlin, *Grandma*

Best performance by an actor in a motion picture, drama

Leonardo DiCaprio, *The Revenant* – **winner**
Bryan Cranston, *Trumbo*
Michael Fassbender, *Steve Jobs*
Eddie Redmayne, *The Danish Girl*
Will Smith, *Concussion*

Best performance by an actor in a supporting role in a motion picture

Sylvester Stallone, *Creed* – **winner**
Paul Dano, *Love*
Idris Elba, *Beasts of No Nation*
Mark Rylance, *Bridge of Spies*
Michael Shannon, *99 Homes*

Best performance by actress in a supporting role in a motion picture

Kate Winslet, *Steve Jobs* – **winner**
Jane Fonda, *Youth*
Jennifer Jason Leigh, *Hateful Eight*
Helen Mirren, *Trumbo*
Alicia Vikander, *Ex Machina*

Best director, motion picture

Alejandro González Iñárritu, *The Revenant* – **winner**
Todd Haynes, *Carol*
Tom McCarthy, *Spotlight*
George Miller, *Mad Max: Fury Road*
Ridley Scott, *The Martian*

Best performance by an actor in a motion picture, musical or comedy

Matt Damon, *The Martian* – **winner**
Christian Bale, *The Big Short*
Steve Carell, *The Big Short*
Al Pacino, *Danny Collins*
Mark Ruffalo, *Infinitely Polar Bear*

Best screenplay, motion picture

Aaron Sorkin, *Steve Jobs* – **winner**
Emma Donoghue, *Room*
Tom McCarthy and Josh Singer, *Spotlight*
Charles Randolph and Adam McKay, *The Big Short*
Quentin Tarantino, *The Hateful Eight*

Best original score, motion picture

Ennio Morricone, *The Hateful Eight* – **winner**
Carter Burwell, *Carol*
Alexandre Desplat, *The Danish Girl*
Daniel Pemberton, *Steve Jobs*
Ryuchi Sakamoto, *The Revenant*

Best motion picture, animated

Inside Out – **winner**
Anomalisa
The Good Dinosaur
The Peanuts Movie
Shaun the Sheep Movie

Best original song, motion picture

"Writing's on the Wall," *Spectre* – **winner**
"Love Me Like You Do," *Fifty Shades of Grey*
"One Kind of Love," *Love & Mercy*
"See You Again," *Furious 7*
"Simple Song #3," *Youth*

Best motion picture, foreign language

Son of Saul – **winner**
The Brand New Testament
The Club
The Fencer
Mustang





THE F***ING BIG PICTURE

- 50 Films To Look Out For In 2016

Superheroes clash. Fish hunt for fish.
The return of Magnum and Blue Steel...
This is going to be an insanely awesome year for movie buffs,
and F*** has been working hard to bring you the lowdown on
52 of the most thrilling films that will be popping up in cinemas in 2016.
Grab some popcorn and start marking your calendars!

By Jedd Jong & Jonathan Sung

DEADPOOL

RELEASE DATE: 4 February 2016

GENRE: Action/Comics

DIRECTOR: Tim Miller

CAST: Ryan Reynolds, Morena Baccarin, Ed Skrein, T.J. Miller, Gina Carano, Brianna Hildebrand, Stefan Kapicic

SYNOPSIS: Hello gentle reader, it is I, Deadpool! I definitely did *not* kill the people in charge of writing this article. Ryan Reynolds is playing me in this stand-alone movie, in which I get my time to shine. About f***ing time! I used to be special forces operative Wade Wilson until I underwent an experimental procedure at a top-secret military facility in the hopes of curing my cancer. The guys who performed the procedure were dicks. As a result of the experiment, I was granted accelerated healing powers, in addition to a twisted, unstable mind and facial disfigurement. Well, “unstable” is relative. When I discover that Ajax (Skrein), one of the men responsible for my transformation, is after my beloved wife Vanessa (Baccarin), I set out to settle the score, meeting some very colourful characters in the process. I’m gonna break the fourth wall, kick lots of ass and eat a ton of chimichangas. And not even the studio at execs at Fox can stand in my way this time.

DID YOU KNOW?: *X-Men* fans were left sorely disappointed by the way I, the fan-favourite character that I am, was depicted *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*. My man Ryan Reynolds was intent on doing right by me and pursued a solo film for years, which has finally come to fruition. Visual effects artist and animator Tim Miller, co-founder of Blur Studio, is making his directorial debut with my movie. The VFX test footage was leaked online in 2014 (I didn’t do it...maybe) and the positive reaction sped up the production process. My trailer received a standing ovation at Comic-Con. Fans lapped up the brash irreverence and penchant for meta humour which was showcased in the trailer, including a jab at *Green Lantern*, he of the animated costume. Stefan Kapicic will show up as metal-skinned mutant Colossus, replacing the initially-cast Andre Ticoeux, who in turned replaced Daniel Cudmore from the second and third *X-Men* movies. I’ll see you at the movies, where you can get acquainted with me and my mouth. – JJ



LONG LONG TIME AGO (我们的故事)

RELEASE DATE: 4 February 2016

GENRE: Drama

DIRECTOR: Jack Neo

CAST: Aileen Tan, Mark Lee, Wang Lei, Suhaimi Yusof, Ryan Lian, Benjamin Tan, Yan Li Xuan, Ng Suan Loi, Charmaine Sei

SYNOPSIS: 51 years ago, on the fateful night of our National Day 9th of August 1965, Zhao Di (Aileen Tan) gave birth to twins, Shun Fatt and Su-Mei, after being driven out of home by her late husband’s first wife. As fate would have it, Su-Mei was born with two moles on her face - deemed a sign of misfortune. Zhao Di reluctantly gave her baby daughter away under the pressure of her family. That was but the first of many trials and tribulations that the resilient Zhao Di, her family and friends faced in their journey from kampong to HDB, as their life stories interweave with Singapore’s growth from 1965 to the early 1970s.

DID YOU KNOW?: Director Jack Neo handpicked Aileen to be the female lead because he admired her professionalism after working with her in *Ah Boys To Men 3*, and also for her fluency in Hokkien as most of her dialogues are in that dialect. Inspired by his own childhood kampong years in Chai Chee, the script was painstakingly reworked by Neo more times than he could count over the past two years, so as to accurately capture the kampong spirit of Singapore’s past. *Ah Boys To Men* fans will be thrilled to know that key cast members from the popular film trilogy will also make cameo appearances in the film. - JS



THE MONKEY KING 2

RELEASE DATE: 4 February 2016

GENRE: Fantasy

DIRECTOR: Cheang Pou-Soi

CAST: Aaron Kwok, Gong Li, Feng Shaofeng, Xiaoshenyang, Him Law, Kelly Chen

SYNOPSIS: It's the Year of the Monkey and appropriately enough, Sun Wukong a.k.a The Monkey King (Kwok) returns in this sequel to the 2014 Chinese New Year blockbuster. Based on the classic novel by Wu Cheng'en, Wukong's adventures continue as he battles the seductive evil spirit known as Baiguji (Gong). Baiguji is intent on capture the monk Tang Sanzang (Feng) so that she may eat his flesh, which she believes will grant her immortality. Wukong, Sanzang, Zhu Bajie (Xiaoshenyang) and Sha Wujing (Law) continue on their epic journey to the west.

DID YOU KNOW?: Donnie Yen, who played the title character in the first film, isn't reprising the role. Replacing him is Aaron Kwok who, funnily enough, portrayed the villainous Bull Demon King opposite Yen's Wukong. Also returning but playing a different character is Him Law, who was the deity Muzha in the previous film but is playing Sha Wujing (Sandy) here. Of the original cast, only Kelly Chen remains as Guan Yin. Louis Koo was initially attached to the role of Tang Sanzang, which was eventually filled by Feng Shaofeng. Kwok underwent martial arts training for the role and had endure an arduous six-hour-long special effects makeup application process each day. The prosthetics required an additional three hours to remove. – JJ

THE REVENANT

RELEASE DATE: 4 February 2016

GENRE: Adventure/Thriller

DIRECTOR: Alejandro González Iñárritu

CAST: Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hardy, Domhnall Gleeson, Will Poulter, Paul Anderson, Lukas Haas, Brendan Fletcher, Brad Carter



SYNOPSIS: After a deadly ambush by the Arikara Native Americans, the remaining surviving party of pelt-hunting trappers escapes and begins their trek back to Fort Kiowa, under the guidance of frontiersman and fur trapper Hugh Glass (DiCaprio). But when a horrifying encounter with a grizzly bear leaves Glass on the brink of death, he was abandoned and left to die by a treacherous fellow trapper, John Fitzgerald (Hardy). Against all odds, the unrelenting Glass braves the harshest forces of man and nature in a quest for revenge.

DID YOU KNOW?: Before DiCaprio and Hardy committed to the film, Samuel L. Jackson and Christian Bale were considered for the role of Hugh Glass, while Sean Penn was approached to play John Fitzgerald. Director Iñárritu was so insistent that computer-generated imagery not be used to enhance the film and the use of only natural lighting that Hardy's planned two-week break from filming in December was extended to six weeks which forced him to drop out of *Suicide Squad*. All that sacrifice certainly paid off as the film garnered the most nominations (12) at this year's Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director (Iñárritu), Best Actor (DiCaprio) and Best Supporting Actor (Hardy). - JS

LET'S EAT! (开饭啦!)

RELEASE DATE: 5 February 2016

GENRE: Comedy

DIRECTOR: Chapman To

CAST: Chapman To, Aimee Chan, C-Kwan, Lo Hoi Pang, Tommy Kuan, Daphne Low, Patricia Mok, Fiona Sit, Luk Wing Kuen, Steve Yap, Henley Hii, Mark Lee, Jeremy Chan, Henry Thia



SYNOPSIS: Dai Hung (To) is the head chef of Ah Yong Café while Rosemary (Aimee Chan) is the daughter of the café's boss, who has returned to Malaysia from a failed relationship, to take over her father's café. Loggerheads at first, both Dai Hung and Rosemary eventually set their differences aside to save the once reputable café, when trouble starts brewing.

DID YOU KNOW?: This is To's directorial debut, as well as Chan's first movie project after an almost two-year hiatus during which she gave birth to her two sons, Aiden Joshua and Nathan Lucas, with Hong Kong actor Moses Chan. To look her best for the movie, Chan kept to an all salad diet and worked out for two hours daily. It must have been tough for Chan to stick to her diet, being faced with all the mouthwatering dishes showcased in the movie. Besides the delicious delicacies, the movie also highlights the interesting aspects of South-East Asian cuisine and the practice of reunion dinners among the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia and Singapore during Chinese New Year's Eve. - JS



THE MERMAID (美人鱼)

RELEASE DATE: 8 February 2016

GENRE: Comedy

DIRECTOR: Stephen Chow

CAST: Deng Chao, Show Lo, Zhang Yu Qi, Jelly Lin

SYNOPSIS: As with most Stephen Chow movies, the storyline has been kept under tight wraps. As the rumour mill goes, some say it is about a mermaid rescuing and falling in love with a handsome young man on board a pillaged ship; while another claimed the story revolves around a wealthy biology professor who seeks out mermaids for his research but ends up falling in love when he finally meets one.

DID YOU KNOW?: 19 year-old newcomer Lin, who had no prior acting experience, was chosen out of 120,000 audition candidates for the role of the titular mermaid. The poor girl had to endure countless scenes being suspended on wired harnesses and was even once rushed to the hospital when an accident on set sent her nose-diving to the ground. Thankfully, she emerged safe and sound with only a few bruises. As the entire film was shot during winter, every cast member who had to film in the water fell sick, except for Luo. Chow then had to utilize heaters for the water tanks, resulting in the spike of the film's budget. However, Luo didn't have it easy either, he had to endure the entire filming process clad only in his underwear. - JS

BROOKLYN

RELEASE DATE: 18 February 2016

GENRE: Drama

DIRECTOR: John Crowley

CAST: Saoirse Ronan, Domhnall Gleeson, Emory Cohen, Jim Broadbent, Julie Walters

SYNOPSIS: In search of a better future, Eilis Lacey (Ronan) leaves Enniscorthy, a small town in southeast Ireland, and travels to America's Brooklyn. While struggling with homesickness, she meets Anthony "Tony" Fiorello who falls for her. When unforeseen circumstances bring her back home to Enniscorthy, she is introduced to Jim Farrell and a new romance soon sparks off. Caught between two countries, two men and a decision that could affect her future, Eilis must decide whether to stay true and steadfast to her past, or bravely go forward with her dreams of the future.

DID YOU KNOW?: If you thought Gleeson looks familiar, you might remember him as Bill Weasley in the *Harry Potter* franchise. Ronan's fellow Oscar nominee Rooney Mara was the original choice to play Eilis. This is the first time Ronan is using her native Irish accent in a film. Ronan was getting a manicure in Dublin when she found out she had received a Golden Globe nomination. In her excitement, she bought champagne for everyone in the salon. - JS



IN THE ROOM

RELEASE DATE: 25 February 2016

GENRE: Drama

DIRECTOR: Eric Khoo

CAST: Koh Boon Pin, Daniel Jenkins, Josie Ho, Ian Tan, Nadia Ar, Netnaphad Pulsavadi, Wasurat Unaprom, Lawrence Wong, Show Nishino, Choi Woo Shik, Kkobbi Kim

SYNOPSIS: Spanning several decades, six sensual, poignant stories of various individuals of diverse backgrounds and nationalities unfold in Room 27 of the The Singapura hotel – an Englishman and a Singaporean man bid each other farewell on the eve of the Japanese invasion; a man on the eve of his sex-change surgery; a striptease artist realising the power of female sexuality in the 1950s; a band's drug-fueled orgy party on New Year's Eve in the 1960s; a single Singaporean man and a married Japanese woman enjoy a prolonged tryst, and the ghost of a musician who perished in the room.

DID YOU KNOW?: The film is anchored as a posthumous tribute to Singapore writer-musician Damien Sin, also the scriptwriter for Khoo's first feature *Mee Pok Man*. For the 1960s rock band's orgy scene, Vernon Cornelius from the local 60s rock band The Quests (who has a cameo in the movie) shared tips and insights of the wild parties the band would have back in the days. Director Khoo revealed cheekily that one of his interns, who played one of George Young's partners in the orgy scene, admitted how she thought Young was really handsome and that she needed to kiss him. Young who said he was okay with that but later suffered from sore lips as she just went for his lips with a passion. Khoo also jokingly shared that another cast member Wong had a backache after the shoot, probably because of the contortions Khoo made him do in his scenes. - JS

ZOOTOPIA

RELEASE DATE: 25 February 2016

GENRE: Animation/Comedy

DIRECTORS: Byron Howard, Rich Moore, Jared Bush

VOICE CAST: Ginnifer Goodwin, Jason Bateman, Idris Elba, J.K. Simmons, Nate Torrence, Jenny Slate, Octavia Spencer, Tommy Chong, Bonnie Hunt



SYNOPSIS: The phrase “urban jungle” takes a literal turn in this Disney animated film. Zootopia is a modern metropolis populated entirely by anthropomorphic animals. Fast-talking con artist Nick Wilde (Bateman), a red fox, is attempting to elude the capture of Zootopia’s top cop, Judy Hopps (Goodwin), a rabbit. In order to solve the case of a missing otter, Nick and Judy have to form an unlikely alliance even though they’re natural enemies.

DID YOU KNOW?: Zootopia’s directing team consists of Byron Howard, co-director of *Bolt* and *Tangled*; Rich Moore, director of *Wreck-It Ralph* and Jared Bush, co-creator of the Disney XD show *Penn Zero: Part-Time Hero*. Howard wanted to create a film in the spirit of *Robin Hood*, the 1973 Disney version which featured an anthropomorphic fox as the title character. The film looks like it will be having a good deal of fun with the premise of anthropomorphic animals occupying a bustling city, and just the cast list alone reveals some pop culture references: Shakira is playing a pop star gazelle and Alan Tudyk is playing “Duke Weaselton”, in reference to the Duke of Weselton, the character Tudyk voiced in *Frozen*. – JJ



ZOOLANDER 2

RELEASE DATE: 3 March 2016

GENRE: Comedy

DIRECTOR: Ben Stiller

CAST: Ben Stiller, Owen Wilson, Penélope Cruz, Kristen Wiig, Olivia Munn, Christine Taylor, Benedict Cumberbatch, Justin Bieber, Ariana Grande, Billy Zane, Will Ferrell

SYNOPSIS: After a 15-year absence from our screens, the dim-witted but mesmerising male model Derek Zoolander (Stiller) returns with a splash in *Zoolander 2* to work his signature Blue Steel/Magnum pout. The sequel has Derek with fellow runway superstar Hansel (Wilson), literally labelled “old” and “lame”, fighting to prevent themselves from fading into obscurity as they navigate the high-fashion scene in Europe, while villainous fashion designer Mugatu (Ferrell) stages a comeback.

DID YOU KNOW?: Stiller stars and directs, also co-writing the screenplay with Justin Theroux. The trio of returning stars will be joined by Penélope Cruz, Christine Taylor, Kristin Wiig and Cyrus Arnold. Stiller and Wilson famously crashed Paris Fashion Week in March 2015 – entirely in character – to announce the film.

The first film boasted some very glittery cameos, and we can expect to see the likes of Justin Bieber, Kim Kardashian, Ariana Grande and Benedict Cumberbatch (yes, really) pop up in this sequel. Cumberbatch’s cameo, an androgynous model named “All”, has attracted some criticism from LGBT advocacy groups. However, just like Stiller did with Hollywood in *Tropic Thunder*, it seems he’s mocking the excesses and quirks of the industry instead of actual LGBT people. – JJ

JANE GOT A GUN

RELEASE DATE: 10 March 2016

GENRE: Western/Drama

DIRECTOR: Gavin O'Connor

CAST: Natalie Portman, Joel Edgerton, Noah Emmerich, Ewan McGregor, Rodrigo Santoro, Boyd Holbrook



SYNOPSIS: It looks like Annie Oakley's got herself some competition. Jane Hammond (Portman) is intent on building a peaceful existence with her husband Bill "Ham" Hammond (Emmerich), after the two have escaped the clutches of the ruthless Bishop Boys gang. After Ham gets into a duel with the Boys' relentless leader Colin (Ewan McGregor), Jane finds herself tangling with the gang once again. With the vengeful crew hot on Ham's trail, Jane has no one to turn to but to her former fiancé Dan Frost (Joel Edgerton) for help in defending her family against certain death. Jane has to outrun and outgun the memories of her past, which have returned to haunt her and her loved ones and threaten to engulf her future.

DID YOU KNOW?: Brian Duffield's screenplay for the film landed on the 2011 Black List of most-liked scripts making the rounds in Hollywood, but despite this auspicious start, *Jane Got a Gun* has weathered a rocky production history. Lynne Ramsay (*We Need to Talk About Kevin*) was originally set to direct, but dropped out and was replaced with Gavin O'Connor (*Warrior*). Michael Fassbender, Jude Law and Bradley Cooper were all attached to the film at some point. Edgerton was set to play the villain, then reshuffled to play the ex-fiancé instead. Cinematographer Darius Khondji also left the production, and was replaced by Mandy Walker. The film's release was pushed back from August 2014 to February 2015 and finally to January 2016. Singapore will be getting *Jane Got a Gun* in March. - JJ



KUNG FU PANDA 3

RELEASE DATE: 10 March 2016

GENRE: Animation/Family

DIRECTORS: Jennifer Yuh Nelson, Alessandro Carloni

VOICE CAST: Jack Black, Angelina Jolie, Dustin Hoffman, Lucy Liu, Seth Rogen, Jackie Chan, David Cross, James Hong, Bryan Cranston, Kate Hudson, J.K. Simmons

SYNOPSIS: The harbinger of awesomeness himself, Po the panda (Black), is back with a bang in the third *Kung Fu Panda* movie. As teased at the conclusion of the second film, Po's parents are still alive in a hidden sanctuary. Po's biological father (Cranston) takes him back to

the village where he naturally doesn't fit in. There, Po meets Mei Mei (Hudson), an overeager panda who was promised to him through an arranged marriage when they were both kids. Meanwhile, an ancient evil spirit known as Kai (Simmons) arises to terrorise all of China. Now, Po must undertake the impossible task of whipping his ungainly kin into fighting shape to take on Kai.

DID YOU KNOW?: *Kung Fu Panda 3* is, appropriately enough, a co-production between the U.S. and China. DreamWorks Animation, based in California, is collaborating on the film with Oriental DreamWorks, based in Shanghai. Approximately one third of the movie will be produced in China. The co-production status allows *Kung Fu Panda 3* to circumvent the strict import quota enforced on foreign films by the Chinese government. The bulk of the voice cast from the first two films is returning, with the notable addition of Bryan Cranston as Po's father Li Shan. Mads Mikkelsen was originally cast as Kai, but the character was rewritten and the role was recast with J.K. Simmons. Additionally, Rebel Wilson was cast as Mei Mei respectively; she was replaced with Kate Hudson when the film went over-schedule. - JJ

SISTERS

RELEASE DATE: 17 March 2016

GENRE: Comedy

DIRECTOR: Jason Moore

CAST: Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Maya Rudolph, Dianne Wiest, James Brolin, John Cena, John Leguizamo, Ike Barinholtz, Madison Davenport, Brian d'Arcy James



SYNOPSIS: Maura Ellis (Poehler), a divorced nurse living in Atlanta who's always taken care of everyone else at the expense of her own enjoyment, and her older sister Kate (Fey), a single mom hairdresser who has always coasted on her smarts and sex appeal, learn that their parents (Brolin and Wiest) are selling their childhood home in Orlando and they have just a few days to clear out their stuff. So, they team up to throw one last, wild bash as both a celebration of their past and an effort to change their future.

DID YOU KNOW?: Former *Saturday Night Live* cast mates and longtime friends, Poehler and Fey attempt a role reversal from the roles they played in their previous film debut (2008's *Baby Mama*), with Poehler playing the responsible one

and Fey the hot mess this time round. Bravely opening on the same day as *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* in the United States, *Sisters* held its own in the opening weekend, finishing third at the box office behind *The Force Awakens*. The entire cast even appeared on *Late Night With Seth Meyers* and used Star Wars action figures to plug their own film in good humour! - JS



THE DIVERGENT SERIES: ALLEGIANT

RELEASE DATE: 17 March 2016

GENRE: Action/Adventure

DIRECTOR: Robert Schwentke

CAST: Shailene Woodley, Theo James, Naomi Watts, Zoë Kravitz, Miles Teller, Ansel Elgort

SYNOPSIS: The third installment of the blockbuster Divergent series franchise, *Allegiant* takes Tris (Woodley) and Four (James) into a new world, far more dangerous than ever before. After the earth-shattering revelations of *Insurgent*, Tris must escape with Four and go beyond the wall enclosing Chicago. For the first time ever, they will leave the only city and family they have ever known. Once outside, old discoveries are quickly rendered meaningless with the revelation of shocking new truths. Tris and Four must quickly decide who they can trust as a ruthless battle ignites beyond the walls of Chicago which threatens all of humanity. In order to survive, Tris will be forced to make

impossible choices about courage, allegiance, sacrifice and love.

DID YOU KNOW?: Although Summit Entertainment previously announced in December 2013 that the film adaptation of *Allegiant*, the third and final novel in the *Divergent* trilogy, would be released in March 2016, serving as the finale of the series, which at the time was planned as a trilogy, the studio later decided in April 2014 to split the last novel into a two-part film, much like the *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, and *Hunger Games* franchises did with the finales of their series. For the book that the film is based on, there were several titles speculated based on the "-gent" theme of the previous titles. Among the more popular fan-guessed titles were: Convergent, Emergent, Resurgent, and even Detergent - which fans and author Veronica Roth have been using to refer to the third book as a joke. - JS



10 CLOVERFIELD LANE

RELEASE DATE: 17 March 2016

GENRE: Action/Adventure

DIRECTOR: Dan Trachtenberg

CAST: John Goodman, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, John Gallagher Jr.

SYNOPSIS: After a car accident, a young woman wakes up to find herself trapped in an underground cellar. The man who rescued her told her he has saved her life as the outside environment has become uninhabitable after a chemical attack. Fearing that he had kidnapped her, she decides to escape, no matter what dangers await outside.

DID YOU KNOW?: Producer J. J. Abrams upholds his reputation for secrecy, sneaking a *Cloverfield* spin-off right under the radar. Before the film's connection to the 2008 found footage monster movie *Cloverfield* was revealed, it was known under the titles *Valencia* and *The Cellar*. The exact nature of how *10 Cloverfield Lane* ties in to the original *Cloverfield* is still being kept under wraps, though Abrams describes it as being a "blood relative" of *Cloverfield* and revealed that the idea came up during the production of *Cloverfield* and was slowly developed over time. This one won't be a found footage film like its predecessor, so those prone to nausea can rest easy. *10 Cloverfield Lane* is written by Josh Campbell and Matt Stuecken, and Damien Chazelle (*Whiplash*). Dan Trachtenberg, who attracted attention with his online fan film *Portal: No Escape*, is directing. - JJ

DISTANCE (再見, 在也不見)

RELEASE DATE: 7 April 2016

GENRE: Drama

DIRECTORS: Xin Yukun, Tan Shijie, Sivaroj Kongsakul

CAST: Chen Bo-lin, Yo Yang, Jiang Wenli, Paul Chun, Yeo Yann Yann

SYNOPSIS: In three separate short stories about kinship, friendship and love, sharing the common theme of distance, Chen portrays three different characters – an estranged son searching for answers, a prisoner's long lost friend forced to confront dark secrets from the past and a lover in a foreign land reminiscing fading memories of yesteryear.

DID YOU KNOW?: Pulling together young award-winning directors from Singapore (Tan), China (Xin) and Thailand (Kongsakul), and shot across Singapore, Southern China, Taiwan and Thailand, the Pan-Asian feature omnibus film, executive produced by homegrown filmmaker Anthony Chen, made its world premiere at the 2015 Golden Horse Film Festival in Taipei to a sold-out audience. With only two to three days in between each segment, Bo-Lin admitted that it was both a stressful and exciting challenge, like a marathon, having to transform between three very different roles. Homegrown director Tan previously helmed short films such as *The Hole* (2011), which won Best Film, Best Director and Best Script at the Singapore Short Film Awards; *For Two* (2009), which was screened at the Venice International Film Festival; and *Not Working Today* (2014), which won the Best Singapore Short Film at the Singapore International Film Festival last year. For the prison scenes in Tan's segment, Chen built a prison set from scratch in an office building in the eastern part of Singapore. - JS



BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE

RELEASE DATE: 24 March 2016

GENRE: Comics/Action

DIRECTOR: Zack Snyder

CAST: Ben Affleck, Henry Cavill, Amy Adams, Jesse Eisenberg, Gal Gadot, Holly Hunter, Diane Lane, Laurence Fishburne, Jeremy Irons



SYNOPSIS: After the events of *Man of Steel*, Superman (Cavill) is being held accountable by the U.S. congress for the destruction of Metropolis in his battle with General Zod. During the fight, one of the buildings that was decimated belonged to Wayne Enterprises, headed by billionaire Bruce Wayne (Affleck). Wayne is also the vigilante Batman, who sees Superman as reckless and too powerful for his own good. Young tech mogul Lex Luthor (Eisenberg) becomes obsessed with defeating Superman, genetically engineering the killing machine known as Doomsday to fight the Man of Steel. While Batman and Superman clash over their opposing approaches to justice, the Amazonian demi-goddess Wonder Woman (Gadot) enters the fray and the seeds for the formation of the Justice League are sown.

DID YOU KNOW?: Marvel has been ruling the roost at the multiplex with the Marvel Cinematic Universe, but rival DC are throwing down the gauntlet with this juggernaut. The sequel to *Man of Steel* will expand the DC Extended Universe and re-introduce the flagship character Batman to the movies. The casting of this film has created quite a stir, with considerable objection aimed at the choices of Ben Affleck, Gal Gadot and Jesse Eisenberg as Batman, Wonder Woman and Lex Luthor respectively. The film will take inspiration from the *Dark Knight Returns* graphic novel by Frank Miller, in which the Superman faces off against Batman on behalf of the US government. Ray Fisher, Jason Momoa and Ezra Miller will appear as Victor Stone, Aquaman and Barry Allen respectively, in minor roles. Eventually, Stone becomes the superhero Cyborg while Allen becomes the Flash. Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Lauren Cohan are playing Bruce Wayne's parents Thomas and Martha Wayne in a flashback sequence. Morgan previously played the Comedian in Snyder's adaptation of the graphic novel *Watchmen*. – JJ

THE BOSS

RELEASE DATE: 7 April 2016

GENRE: Comedy

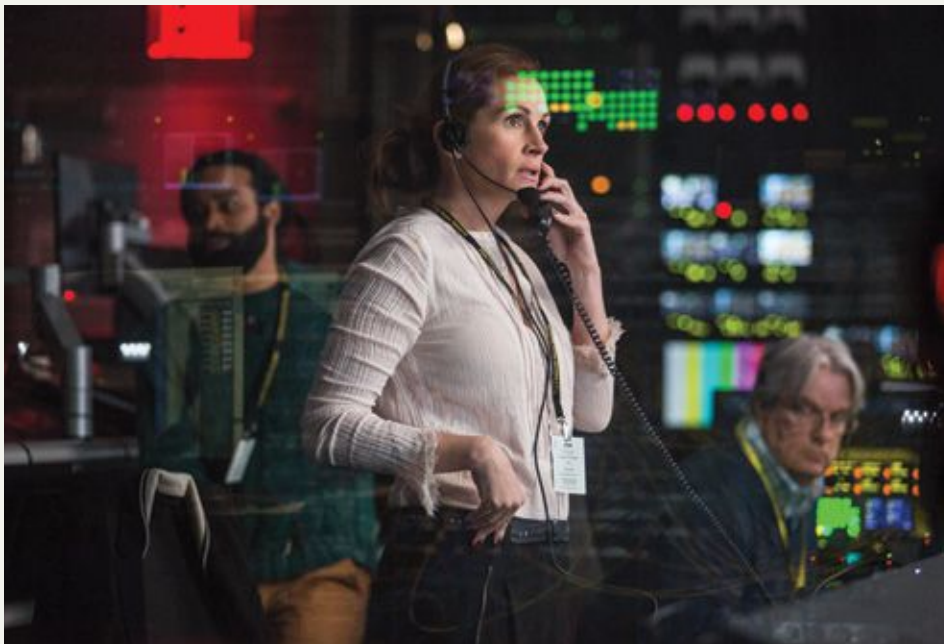
DIRECTOR: Ben Falcone

CAST: Melissa McCarthy, Kristen Bell, Peter Dinklage, Kristen Schaal, Kathy Bates, Ben Falcone



SYNOPSIS: Michelle Darnell (McCarthy), a titan of industry who is sent to prison after she's convicted of insider trading, emerges ready to rebrand herself as America's latest sweetheart. But not everyone she screwed over is so quick to forgive and forget.

DID YOU KNOW?: After their previous box office success with the 2014 comedy *Tammy*, this is the second film written by McCarthy and her husband Ben Falcone, along Steve Mallory. This also marks the third collaboration between McCarthy and Bates, who plays her mentor in the film. They previously appeared together on *Tammy* and sitcom *Mike & Molly*. Before Peter Dinklage was finally cast as the film's antagonist, the studio considered Oprah Winfrey, Jon Hamm and Sandra Bullock as possibilities for the role. - JS



MONEY MONSTER

RELEASE DATE: 7 April 2016

GENRE: Drama/Thriller

DIRECTOR: Jodie Foster

CAST: George Clooney, Julia Roberts, Jack O'Connell, Dominic West, Caitriona Balfe, Christopher Denham, Giancarlo Esposito

SYNOPSIS: Lee Gates (Clooney) is a popular financial guru with a hit TV show named "*Money Monster*", through which he dispenses investing advice. Kyle Budwell (O'Connell), a disgruntled blue-collar worker who lost all his money following a bad tip from Gates' show, holds Gates and the live *Money Monster* audience hostage, threatening to kill Lee if he does not get the stock up 24 and a half points before the bell. Patty Fenn (Roberts), the

director and executive producer of *Money Madness*, would normally be happy to see the show do such astronomical ratings, though not under these circumstances. It's a race against time to save Gates and the audience as the world stays glued to their TV screens.

DID YOU KNOW?: *Money Monster* continues actress Jodie Foster's emphasis on directing. Foster made her directorial debut with 1991's *Little Man Tate*, following that with 1995's *Home for the Holidays*. More recently, she helmed 2011's *The Beaver* and directed episodes of *Orange is the New Black* and *House of Cards*. *Money Monster* reunites Clooney and Roberts, who appeared together in *Ocean's Eleven*, *Ocean's Twelve* and *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*. Oh, the first trailer seems to give away a whole lot, so don't watch that if you haven't already! - JJ

THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR

RELEASE DATE: 14 April 2016

GENRE: Fantasy/Adventure

DIRECTOR: Cedric Nicolas-Troyan

CAST: Chris Hemsworth, Charlize Theron, Emily Blunt, Jessica Chastain, Nick Frost, Sam Claflin



SYNOPSIS: There's a snow-storm brewing in this follow-up to *Snow White And The Huntsman*, which will function as both a prequel and sequel i.e., it covers events that take place before *and* after the first film. *Winter's War* will explore the origins of Eric The Huntsman (Hemsworth), who served as a warrior under Freya (Blunt), the Ice Queen. Eric defied Freya's one commandment – "Forever harden your heart to love" – when he fell for fellow warrior Sara (Chastain). After learning of her sister Ravenna's (Theron) death at the hands of Snow White, Freya summons her remaining soldiers to retrieve the Magic Mirror and attempts to resurrect her sister. Eric and Sara must fight their way back to each other and defeat the deadly sisters.

DID YOU KNOW?: After news of director Rupert Sanders' affair with Kristen Stewart broke, the original plans for a direct sequel to *Snow White And The Huntsman* were shelved in favour of a spin-off focusing on the Huntsman himself. Neither Stewart nor Sanders is returning, with visual effects artist Cedric Nicolas-Troyan taking the directorial reins. In addition to Hemsworth, Sam Claflin and Nick Frost are reprising their roles from the first film. Ordinarily, there won't be much reason to get excited about a half-baked sequel to a film that wasn't all that great to begin with, but we have to admit that we're thrilled at the prospect of seeing Emily Blunt, Jessica Chastain and Charlize Theron in the same movie. Talk about a trio of badass A-list actresses! - JJ



THE JUNGLE BOOK

RELEASE DATE: 14 April 2016

GENRE: Fantasy/Adventure

DIRECTOR: Jon Favreau

CAST: Neel Sethi, Bill Murray, Ben Kingsley, Christopher Walken, Idris Elba, Lupita Nyong'o, Scarlett Johansson, Giancarlo Esposito

SYNOPSIS: Mowgli (Sethi) is a boy who was raised in the depths of the jungle by the Indian wolves Raksha (Nyong'o) and Akela (Esposito). When the fearsome Bengal tiger Shere Khan (Elba) threatens his life, Mowgli is forced to strike out on his own, away from the safety of home. Guided by Bagheera the black panther (Kingsley) and Baloo the bear (Murray), he embarks on a journey of self-discovery. Along the way, Mowgli encounters jungle creatures who do not necessarily have the purest of intentions. These include Kaa (Johansson), a python with a seductive voice and hypnotic gaze, and the smooth-talking King Louie (Walken), an ape who tries to coerce Mowgli into divulging the secret of fire, known to him as the "red flower".

DID YOU KNOW?: This hybrid of live-action and CGI animation is a remake of Disney's 1967 animated film *The Jungle Book*, which was in turn an adaptation of the collection of Rudyard Kipling's short stories

of the same name. Director Jon Favreau has made several significant changes, including making the python Kaa female, casting Scarlett Johansson in the role. The animals in the film are created using a combination of motion capture and computer-generated animation from scratch. Favreau has stated that he wanted to use motion capture judiciously to avoid entering the "uncanny valley", wherein the animation can feel creepy. Bill Murray will be singing the classic Terry Gilkyson song *The Bare Necessities* as Baloo, while Richard M. Sherman, who wrote the songs for the 1967 film alongside his late brother Robert, will be writing new songs for this film. The Sherman Brothers composed the music for *Mary Poppins* and classic Disneyland attractions including *It's a Small World*, *Carousel of Progress* and *The Enchanted Tiki Room*. Andy Serkis is directing and starring in a competing live-action/CGI *Jungle Book* film, to be released next year. – JJ



CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

RELEASE DATE: 28 April 2016

GENRE: Comics/Action

DIRECTORS: Joe and Anthony Russo

CAST: Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr., Scarlett Johansson, Sebastian Stan, Anthony Mackie, Emily VanCamp, Don Cheadle, Jeremy Renner, Chadwick Boseman, Paul Bettany, Elizabeth Olsen, Paul Rudd, Frank Grillo, Tom Holland, Daniel Brühl, William Hurt



SYNOPSIS: It is a year after the destruction that ravaged Sokovia in *Avengers: Age of Ultron* and an international incident involving Captain America and the Avengers results in more collateral damage. This prompts politicians to establish a system of accountability and a governing body to regulate the superhero activities of the Avengers. This results in the fracturing of the team into two opposing factions – one led by Steve Rogers/Captain America (Evans) who wishes to operate without regulation, and one led by Tony Stark/Iron Man (Downey) who supports government oversight – while they attempt to protect the world from Hydra operatives Baron Zemo (Brühl) and Crossbones (Grillo). In the meantime, Rogers' best friend-turned foe Bucky Barnes (Stan) is coming to terms with the regaining of his memories, now fighting alongside Captain America instead of against him.

DID YOU KNOW?: 2016 looks to be the year of superhero clashes, with *Captain America: Civil War* hot on the heels of *Batman v. Superman*. The film is loosely adapted from the 2006-2007 Marvel Comics crossover event *Civil War*, written by Mark Millar. However, since the film takes place in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, it will be building off of the events of *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron* instead of adhering to the storyline in the comics. The film's cast includes most of the Avengers and introduces T'challa/Black Panther (Boseman) and Peter Parker/Spider-Man (Holland) into the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The Russo brothers had been lobbying for months to include Spider-Man in the film, and Disney and Sony finally reached a licensing agreement after the collapse of the *Amazing Spider-Man* film series. - JJ

HAIL, CAESAR!

RELEASE DATE: 21 April 2016

GENRE: Comedy/Drama/Musical

DIRECTOR: Joel Coen & Ethan Coen

CAST: Josh Brolin, George Clooney, Alden Ehrenreich, Ralph Fiennes, Jonah Hill, Scarlett Johansson, Frances McDormand, Fisher Stevens, Tilda Swinton, Dolph Lundgren, Clancy Brown, Christopher Lambert, Channing Tatum



SYNOPSIS: The film is set in the Hollywood of the 1950s, centering on Eddie Mannix (Brolin), a studio fixer who has to hide potential high-profile Hollywood scandals from the press. While Mannix was a real-life producer and Hollywood personality, the rest of the film is fictional. When Baird Whitlock (Clooney), the star of the movie *Hail, Caesar!* is kidnapped, Mannix is tasked with collecting the \$100,000 ransom and rescuing Whitlock in order to salvage the biggest production of the year.

DID YOU KNOW?: The Coen brothers had initially set out to make *Hail, Caesar!* about a troupe of travelling performers in the 1920s putting on a play set in Ancient Rome but, after a spell in development hell, the project evolved into a satire on '50s Hollywood. The film harks back to an era of lavishly produced big-screen musicals, with an all-star cast that includes Johansson evoking Esther Williams and Tatum playing a tap-dancing sailor. As can be expected from the Coens though, there will be a seedy underbelly to all this fluff and cheer. - JJ



THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE

RELEASE DATE: 12 May 2016

GENRE: Animation/Comedy

DIRECTORS: Fergal Reilly, Clay Kaytis

VOICE CAST: Jason Sudeikis, Josh Gad, Danny McBride, Maya Rudolph, Bill Hader, Peter Dinklage, Kate McKinnon, Tony Hale, Keegan Michael-Key

SYNOPSIS: It's time to ruffle some feathers in this film based on the Rovio mobile game. Red (Sudeikis), Stella, Chuck (Gad), Bomb (McBride), Matilda (Rudolph), the Mighty Eagle (Dinklage), Hal, Bubbles, and Terence are flightless birds who live an idyllic existence on an island paradise. When an army of Bad Piggies with sinister intent, led by Leonard the king pig (Hader), lands on their island, the Angry Birds must discover just what Leonard is up to and foil his malicious plans.

DID YOU KNOW?: Rovio Entertainment, the developer of the *Angry Birds* games, is based in Finland and this film is a Finnish-American co-production. The film's estimated budget of €75 million makes it the most expensive Finnish film in history, eclipsing the €8.5 million budget of the 2014 action-adventure film *Big Game*. In addition to a star-studded voice cast of comedians, many of whom are Saturday Night Live alums, *The Angry Birds Movie* also features vocal cameos from YouTube sketch comedy duo Ian Andrew Hecox and Anthony Padilla, better-known as Smosh. - JJ

SYNOPSIS: Several years after the events of 2010's *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice Kingsleigh (Wasikowska) is following in her father's footsteps, sailing the high seas. Upon her return to London, she comes across a magical looking glass and returns to the fantastical realm of Underland, reuniting with friends the White Rabbit (Sheen), Absolem (Rickman), the Cheshire Cat (Fry) and the Mad Hatter (Depp). Something is up with the Hatter, who has lost his Muchness, so the White Queen (Hathaway) sends Alice on a quest to borrow the Chronosphere, a metallic globe inside the chamber of the Grand Clock which powers all time. Embarking on a journey through time, she comes across friends like the Hatter's father Zanik Hightopp (Ifans) and enemies like the villainous Time (Cohen) at different points in their lives, and embarks on a perilous race to save the Hatter before time runs out.



ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

RELEASE DATE: 26 May 2016

GENRE: Fantasy/Adventure/Comedy

DIRECTOR: James Bobin

CAST: Mia Wasikowska, Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham Carter, Anne Hathaway, Sacha Baron Cohen, Rhys Ifans, Matt Lucas, Alan Rickman, Stephen Fry, Michael Sheen

DID YOU KNOW?: While Tim Burton is not returning to direct, replaced by James Bobin (*Muppets Most Wanted*), the large majority of the cast is reprising their roles from the first film. Alan Rickman, Stephen Fry and Michael Sheen are also back to lend their voices to Absolem the Caterpillar, the Cheshire Cat and the White Rabbit respectively. This is one of the late Rickman's final performances. The new additions to the cast include Sacha Baron Cohen as the villain Time, Rhys Ifans as the Mad Hatter's father and Andrew Scott as Addison Bennet. Director Bobin helped create Cohen's signature characters Ali G, Borat, and Brüno and it should be fun to see the zany actor menace our heroes. Linda Woolverton (*Beauty and the Beast*), who penned the screenplay for the 2010 film, is also writing the script for the sequel, based on Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*. – JJ

YOUNG AND FABULOUS (最佳伙扮)

RELEASE DATE: 26 May 2016

GENRE: Drama

DIRECTOR: Kevin Sng

CAST: Aloysius Pang, Joyce Chu, Joshua Tan, Gurmit Singh, Quan Yi Fong, Henry Thia, Jeffrey Xu, Jordan Ng, Constance Soong, Bernard Tan, The Sam Willows



SYNOPSIS: A coming-of-age story of a group of teenage friends – a friendless, introverted Secondary Four nerd (Pang), the seemingly social media hungry school belle (Chu), the money-faced resident problematic jock (Tan), and a sassy, opinionated and experienced cosplayer (Xu), united by their common love for cosplay – who overcomes various challenges and obstacles to fulfill their dreams.

DID YOU KNOW?: With a production budget of S\$1.2 million, this is Singapore's first cosplay-themed movie. It features elaborate, vibrant costumes tailored by actual cosplayers from Singapore's cosplay community as well as spectacular multimedia special effects and action scenes. Making his first silver screen debut, MediaCorp Duke Xu revealed he actually did a bit of cosplaying when he was in junior high school, and even went out of his way to look like the character Kaede Rukawa from the popular basketball manga *Slam Dunk*. Also making her big screen debut is Malaysian singer Joyce Chu, better known by her online moniker Four-leaf Clover. Chu, who shot to fame after singing the Malaysian Chabor in a YouTube video admitted that it is "a very new experience" working on a film as compared to web-videos and that it was a great challenge getting rid of her thick Malaysian accent when she had to speak with a Singaporean accent in the film. - JS



X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

RELEASE DATE: 19 May 2016

GENRE: Comics/Action

DIRECTOR: Bryan Singer

CAST: James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence, Oscar Isaac, Nicholas Hoult, Rose Byrne, Tye Sheridan, Sophie Turner, Olivia Munn, Lucas Till, Alexandra Shipp, Evan Peters, Kodi Smit-McPhee, Ben Hardy, Lana Condor

SYNOPSIS: En Sabah Nur a.k.a. Apocalypse (Isaac), the first and most powerful mutant in history, has been revered as a god since ancient times. The immortal, invincible being awakes after several millennia. Bitter with the state of the modern world and bent on regaining the dominion he once had, Apocalypse recruits Magneto (Fassbender), Storm (Shipp), Archangel (Hardy) and Psylocke (Munn), to act as his “four horsemen”, cleansing humanity and establishing a new world order. Professor X (McAvoy), Beast (Hoult) and Mystique (Lawrence) must lead a team of young mutants comprising Cyclops (Sheridan), Jean Grey (Turner), Havok (Till), Quicksilver (Peters), Nightcrawler (Smith-McPhee) and Jubilee (Condor) to combat Apocalypse and his harbingers of doom.

DID YOU KNOW?: The stinger scene after the credits of *X-Men: Days of Future Past* teased the appearance of Apocalypse, the power-mad granddaddy of all mutant-kind. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens'* Oscar Isaac goes from piloting X-Wings to fighting X-Men as the title character. *X-Men: First Class* was set in the 60s, *Days of Future Past* was set primarily in the 70s and *X-Men: Apocalypse* is set in the 80s, completing this trilogy. Plucky fan-favourite Jubilee was portrayed by Katrina Florence in *X-Men* and by Kea Wong in *X2: X-Men United* and *X-Men: The Last Stand*, but will finally have a more prominent role in this film, played by Lana Condor. James McAvoy also finally goes bald in this one. - JJ

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: OUT OF THE SHADOWS

RELEASE DATE: 2 June 2016

GENRE: Sci-fi/Action/Comedy

DIRECTOR: Dave Green

CAST: Alan Ritchson, Noel Fisher, Johnny Knoxville, Pete Ploszek, Jeremy Howard, Megan Fox, Stephen Amell, Will Arnett, William Fichtner, Brian Tee, Tyler Perry, Brittany Ishibashi, Laura Linney, Tony Shalhoub, Danny Woodburn, Gary Anthony Williams, Stephen "Sheamus" Farrelly



SYNOPSIS: The heroes in a half shell are back to dispense more Turtle Power in this sequel to 2014's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* reboot. Leonardo (Knoxville/Ploszek), Raphael (Ritchson), Michelangelo (Fisher) and Donatello (Howard) have to contend with mad scientist Baxter Stockman (Perry), who has been hired by the Foot Clan to engineer mutant monsters to combat the Turtles. The results of these experiments are humanoid warthog Bebop (Williams) and humanoid rhinoceros Rocksteady (Farrelly). The Foot Clan's leader Shredder (Tee) and his right-hand woman Karai (Ishibashi) have also returned with a vengeance. The Turtles and their human allies April O'Neil (Fox) and Vern Fenwick (Arnett) call upon the vigilante Casey Jones (Amell) to help them safeguard New York from threats old and new.

DID YOU KNOW?: While most of the cast from the 2014 film have returned, there's some reshuffling afoot: Brian Tee is replacing Tohoru Masamune as the Shredder and Brittany Ishibashi is succeeding Minae Noji as Karai. Fan-favourite characters Bebop, Rocksteady and Casey Jones are joining the rebooted film series. Voice actor and comedian Gary Anthony Williams is playing Bebop and WWE wrestler Sheamus is playing Rocksteady, via performance capture. *Arrow*'s Stephen Amell swaps his green hood for a hockey mask as Casey Jones. Baxter Stockman was originally set to appear in the 2014 film played by Mos Def, but was eventually omitted and is now played by Tyler Perry. The spaceships depicted in the trailer emerging from a portal could well be from Dimension X, home of the alien warlord Krang. Replacing Jonathan Liebesman in the director's seat is *Earth to Echo*'s Dave Green. While the first film alienated a fair few number of long-time fans, the incorporation of several fan-favourite elements from the *Turtles* lore might just make this an improvement. - JJ



NOW YOU SEE ME: THE SECOND ACT

SYNOPSIS: J. Daniel Atlas (Eisenberg), Merritt McKinney (Harrelson), Jack Wilder (Franco) and new member Lula (Caplan) are "The Four Horsemen", a team of illusionists and self-styled Robin Hoods who employ stage magic techniques to perform elaborate heists. At the end of the first film, The Four Horsemen were inducted into an ancient secret society of magicians by Dylan Rhodes (Ruffalo), an FBI agent who appeared to be on their tail but who was really the mastermind of an elaborate scheme. Walter Tressler (Radcliffe) seeks revenge against the Four Horsemen for bankrupting his father Arthur (Caine), the act's former sponsor. Also keen to get back against the magicians and Rhodes is Thaddeus Bradley (Freeman), who is locked up in jail following the events of the first film.

DID YOU KNOW?: Isla Fisher, who portrayed the Four Horsemen's female member Henley Reeves, was unable to reprise the role due to her pregnancy. Lizzy Caplan was cast as new character Lula in her stead. Replacing Louis Letterier in the director's chair is Jon M. Chu, director of three *Step Up* films, *G.I. Joe: Retaliation* and *Jem and the Holograms*. It's time for Daniel Radcliffe, Harry Potter himself, to get reacquainted with magic as the antagonist going up against the Horsemen. The film was shot in London and Macau. Hopefully, it answers some of the burning questions viewers of the first *Now You See Me* had, while offering up more dazzling spectacle. - JJ

RELEASE DATE: 9 June 2016

GENRE: Action/Comedy/Thriller

DIRECTOR: Jon M. Chu

CAST: Mark Ruffalo, Jesse Eisenberg, Woody Harrelson, Dave Franco, Lizzy Caplan, Daniel Radcliffe, Michael Caine, Morgan Freeman, Sanaa Lathan, Jay Chou

WARCRAFT: THE BEGINNING

RELEASE DATE: 9 June 2016

GENRE: Fantasy/Action/Adventure

DIRECTOR: Duncan Jones

CAST: Travis Fimmel, Toby Kebbell, Paula Patton, Ben Foster, Dominic Cooper, Ben Schnetzer, Robert Kazinsky, Daniel Wu, Ruth Negga, Anna Galvin, Clancy Brown



SYNOPSIS: The realm of Azeroth stands on the brink of all-out war as its human-led civilization, led by the humans, faces a fearsome race of invaders. Orc warriors fleeing their dying world of Draenor are seeking another to call their own. As a gateway between the two worlds known as the Dark Portal opens, the humans face destruction while the orcs face extinction. Anduin Lothar (Fimmel), leader of the humans, and Durotan (Kebbell), leader of the orcs, are set on a collision course that will decide the fate of their family, their people and their home. Both sides will come to realise that war has many faces and everyone fights for something.

DID YOU KNOW?: A live-action film based on the successful *Warcraft* franchise of video games and novels was first announced in 2006. The film was going to be released in 2009, then pushed back to 2011, and fans will finally see the world of *Warcraft* come to life on the big screen this year. Notorious director Uwe Boll, responsible for plenty of terrible video game films, made a bid to direct and was soundly rejected by Blizzard Entertainment. Sam Raimi was originally set to direct, but dropped out in favour of making *Oz: The Great and Powerful*. He was replaced with Duncan Jones of *Moon* and *Source Code* fame. The screenplay is written by Jones and Charles Leavitt, from a story by video game designer and key player at Blizzard, Chris Metzen. Jones described the complexity of filming the effects-heavy fantasy epic as akin to “*Avatar* and *Game of Thrones* combined.” – JJ

FINDING DORY

RELEASE DATE: 16 June 2016

GENRE: Animation

DIRECTOR: Andrew Stanton

CAST: Ellen DeGeneres, Hayden Rolence, Albert Brooks, Diane Keaton, Ed O'Neill, Kailin Olson, Ty Burrell



SYNOPSIS: Picking up six months from where *Finding Nemo* left off, Dory (DeGeneres) suddenly recalls her childhood memories. Remembering something about “the jewel of Monterey, California”, she sets out to find her family accompanied by Nemo and Marlin (Rolence and Brooks). Their journey leads them to the Monterey Marine Life Institute, where the trio meets new friends Bailey, a white beluga whale; Destiny, a whale shark; and Hank the octopus.

DID YOU KNOW?: DeGeneres had a running gag on her talk show in which she regularly berates Disney’s Pixar for not producing a sequel to the 2003 hit animation *Finding Nemo*, pointing out that there have been sequels to *Toy Story*, *Cars* and *Shrek*, but none so far to the aquatic adventure (until now), considering that with over 25 million likes, Dory is the most liked character on Facebook from any Disney or Pixar films. Originally set in an aquatic park, the setting of the film was later changed to a Marine Biology Institute after the controversial documentary *Blackfish* (2013) was screened for the crew of Pixar, highlighting on the controversy over captive killer whales in aquatic parks. - JS



THE BFG

RELEASE DATE: 21 June 2016

GENRE: Adventure/Fantasy

DIRECTOR: Steven Spielberg

CAST: Mark Rylance, Ruby Barnhill, Penelope Wilton, Jemaine Clement, Rebecca Hall, Rafe Spall, Bill Hader

SYNOPSIS: Standing 24-feet tall with enormous ears and a keen sense of smell, the endearingly dim-witted Big Friendly Giant (Rylance) or BFG for short, is nothing like his fellow inhabitants Bloodbottler (Hader) and Fleshlumpeater (Clement) of Giant Country, who are at least twice as scary and have been known to eat humans. Upon her arrival in Giant Country, Sophie, a precocious 10-year-old girl from London, who is initially frightened of the mysterious giant who has brought her to

his cave, soon realizes that the BFG is actually quite gentle and charming and their affection for one another quickly grows. But Sophie’s presence in Giant Country has attracted the unwanted attention of the other giants and the unlikely duo soon depart for London to convince Queen Victoria (Wilton) that giants do indeed exist, and to warn her of the precarious giant situation.

DID YOU KNOW?: Based on the 1982 children’s book written by Roald Dahl and illustrated by Quentin Blake, this is the book’s second film adaptation, the first one being a 1989 British direct to television animation. Speaking of seconds, this will also be Disney’s second film adaptation based on a Roald Dahl book in 20 years, the first being *James and the Giant Peach* (1996). This is also the first Disney film to be directed by Spielberg. - JS

INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE

RELEASE DATE: 23 June 2016

GENRE: Sci-fi/Action

DIRECTOR: Roland Emmerich

CAST: Jeff Goldblum, Bill Pullman, Liam Hemsworth, Jessie Usher, Maika Monroe, Sela Ward, Judd Hirsch, Angelababy, Joey King, Vivica A. Fox, Brent Spiner, Charlotte Gainsbourg, William Fichtner



SYNOPSIS: 20 years after the devastating first attack, the alien invaders are seeking vengeance on earth and this time, it will take more than a computer virus uploaded from a Mac Powerbook to stop them. The nations of earth have been gradually picking up the pieces from the initial attack, co-opting salvaged alien technology to strengthen their defences. International cooperation has built an immense defence program in anticipation of the inevitable second wave. Sure enough, straggling remnants of the alien race have established a colony deep within the Congo, sending out a distress signal. Now, a new vicious, advanced task force of marauders is on its way to besiege earth. But this time, with highly trained brave men and women poised for retaliation, we're ready.

DID YOU KNOW?: Director Roland Emmerich is at the helm again, and this is pitched as a "next generation" story following the children of two of the characters from the first film. Notably absent is Will Smith, whose \$50 million asking price for two sequels shot back-to-back was turned down by Fox. According to the "War of 1996" viral marketing webpage, his character apparently died in between films while test-piloting the first hybrid fighter. Singaporean actor Chin Han, who appeared in Emmerich's *2012*, will have a minor role as the leader of the Chinese fighter squadron. *Independence Day: Resurgence* is intended to launch a new trilogy of *Independence Day* films. The 1996 movie remains a high watermark for bombastic, cheesy, enjoyably silly popcorn fun, so we hope the sequel continues that legacy. – JJ



COLD WAR 2 (寒战2)

RELEASE DATE: 1 July 2016

GENRE: Action/Crime

DIRECTORS: Lok Man Leung, Kim-Ching Luk

CAST: Aaron Kwok, Chow Yun Fatt, Tony Leung Ka Fai, Eddie Peng

SYNOPSIS: The story of *Cold War 2* will kick off after the end of the first film. Newly promoted to Commissioner of Police after the success of the Cold War rescue operation, Sean K.F. Lau (Kwok) faces a brand new foe in this sequel. The unseen mysterious mastermind responsible for the heinous crimes in the first

film finally reveals himself here, and ruthlessly kidnaps Sean's wife and daughter. Proving to be no match for the viciously wicked mastermind, Sean convinces former rival, the retired DCP of Operations officer Waise Lee (Leung), to return to his post to help him solve the tricky kidnapping case and bring the devious villain to justice. However, as they delve deeper into the case, they discover a shocking revelation linking Waise's father to the antagonist. Henceforth, a battle of wits between the formidable foursome begins.

DID YOU KNOW?: Filmed in the Kam Tin district of Hong Kong, the gun battles involving Leung, Kenny Wong and Tony Yang reportedly looked so realistic that members of the public thought a real robbery was taking place. It is rumoured that famous China singer Bibi Zhou Bi Chang, best known as the first runner-up in the 2005 Super Girl Competition, guest stars as a key character in this sequel, but the role has been kept tightly under wraps by directors Leung and Luk. So fans of Zhou will just have to watch the film to find out. – JS



THE LEGEND OF TARZAN

RELEASE DATE: 7 July 2016

GENRE: Action/Adventure

DIRECTOR: David Yates

CAST: Alexander Skarsgård, Margot Robbie, Samuel L. Jackson, Christoph Waltz, Djimon Hounsou



SYNOPSIS: It has been years since the man once known as Tarzan (Skarsgård) left the jungles of Africa behind for a gentrified life in London as John Clayton III, Lord Greystoke, with his beloved wife, Jane Porter (Robbie) at his side. Now, he has been invited back to the Congo to serve as a trade emissary of Parliament, unaware that he is a pawn in a deadly convergence of greed and revenge, masterminded by the corrupt Belgian Captain Léon Rom (Waltz).

DID YOU KNOW?: Before Skarsgård was cast as the legendary jungle hunk, Henry Cavill, Tom Hardy, Charlie Hunnam and even Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps were considered for the titular role. As for his ladylove, Jessica Chastain was originally attached to play the role, but dropped out after the movie got delayed, while Emma Stone turned down the offer. To get into shape, Skarsgård spent four months in an “intense and all-consuming” workout regime where he bulked up using a heavy weight-lifting routine and a chicken diet. Tarzan’s nemesis, Captain Rom, is based on Clayton from the 1999 Disney animated musical film adaptation of Tarzan. – JS

GHOST-BUSTERS

RELEASE DATE: 14 July 2016

GENRE: Action/Comedy/Sci-Fi

DIRECTOR: Paul Feig

CAST: Melissa McCarthy, Kristen Wiig, Kate McKinnon, Leslie Jones

SYNOPSIS: “Who you gonna call?” Well, in Feig’s all-female reboot of *Ghostbusters*, the answer is Abby Yates (McCarthy), Erin Gilbert (Wiig), Jillian Holtzmann (McKinnon) and Patty Tolan (Jones). *Ghostbusters* – co-scripted by Feig and Katie Dippold – centres on this all-female team coming to the rescue when Manhattan is invaded by ghosts.

DID YOU KNOW?: It’s been great fun to keep tabs on Feig’s cast, which includes Chris Hemsworth as Kevin, the team’s receptionist – a gender-bending twist on Annie Potts’ Janine in the original films – as well as Andy Garcia, Cecily Strong and Matt Walsh. Comedian Neil Casey has been cast as Rowan, the chief antagonist in the film, though it’s unclear just yet how this baddie will menace our heroines. Fans of the original *Ghostbusters* may also rejoice to know that Dan Aykroyd will definitely be popping up in some fashion in the film. - SW



STAR TREK BEYOND

RELEASE DATE: 21 July 2016

GENRE: Sci-Fi/Action/Adventure

DIRECTOR: Justin Lin

CAST: Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Zoe Saldana, Karl Urban, John Cho, Simon Pegg, Anton Yelchin, Sofia Boutella, Idris Elba

SYNOPSIS: It’s time to venture where no one has gone before in the third instalment of the rebooted *Star Trek* franchise. Captain Kirk (Pine), Spock (Quinto), Uhura (Saldana), Bones (Urban), Scotty (Pegg), Sulu (Cho) and Chekov (Yelchin) are back on the bridge of the USS *Enterprise*. The crew is besieged by a powerful alien enemy, which swarms and destroys their ship, stranding them on a hostile alien planet.

They find themselves face to face with a ruthless new enemy named Krall (Elba), and must defeat him as they find a way off the planet and back home.

DID YOU KNOW?: J. J. Abrams, who directed the first two films in the rebooted *Star Trek* series, was busy with that *other* blockbuster sci-fi extravaganza, so he couldn’t direct this one. Abrams remains on board as producer, with *Fast and Furious*’ Justin Lin succeeding him in the director’s chair. Sofia Boutella, best known as Gazelle in *Kingsman: The Secret Service*, is playing the alien Jaylah, who becomes an ally to our marooned heroes. Indonesian actor/martial artist Joe Taslim, known for his role in *The Raid: Redemption* and who worked with Lin on *Fast & Furious 6*, will also appear. The first trailer has not gone over particularly well – the main point of contention being the use of the Beastie Boys’ *Sabotage*, which doesn’t seem particularly *Star Trek*-esque as a music choice. Then again, young Kirk was depicted listening to the Beastie Boys while out on a joyride in the 2009 movie. - JJ



UNTITLED FIFTH BOURNE FILM

RELEASE DATE: 28 July 2016

GENRE: Action/Thriller

DIRECTOR: Paul Greengrass

CAST: Matt Damon, Julia Stiles, Alicia Vikander, Tommy Lee Jones, Vincent Cassel, Riz Ahmed, Ato Essandoh, Scott Shepherd

SYNOPSIS: Not much is known about the plot of the fifth instalment in the *Bourne* franchise. We don't actually even know the title yet. Jason Bourne being the skilled covert operative he is, that's probably to be expected.

DID YOU KNOW?: While it was initially reported that the fifth *Bourne* movie would be a sequel to *The Bourne Legacy* starring Jeremy Renner as separate character Aaron Cross, Matt Damon announced that he would back in his signature role of Jason Bourne. Renner will be back as Cross in a separate film at a later date. Also back is Paul Greengrass, director of *The Bourne Supremacy* and *The Bourne Ultimatum*. The screenplay is written by Greengrass, Damon and editor Christopher Rouse, who edited the second and third films. So far, the only cast member confirmed to be returning from the trilogy is Julia Stiles as Nicky Parsons. Alicia Vikander, arguably the biggest breakout star of 2015, passed on *Assassin's Creed* to star in this film. *Bourne 5* reunites Matt Damon with Tommy Lee Jones; Damon played Jones' son in the 1995 TV movie *The Good Old Boys*. Jones will be playing the CIA director. – JJ



MY LOVE, SINEMA (放映.爱)

RELEASE DATE: 4 August 2016

GENRE: Drama/Romance

DIRECTOR: Tan Ai Leng

CAST: Tosh Zhang, Cheryl Wee, Jeff Wang

SYNOPSIS: The story unfolds in 1956, with starry-eyed 20-year-old Kheong (Zhang), who moves to Singapore from a kampong in Malaysia, to train as a film projectionist. There, he meets Lee (Wang) who becomes his mentor and also Wei (Wee), a young Chinese teacher who finds herself torn between her obligation as a dutiful daughter and her requited feelings towards Kheong. As their affection towards each other grows, they face various obstacles, preventing them from being together.

DID YOU KNOW?: *Ah Boys to Men* star, Zhang took a pay cut for a chance to star in this film. According to Zhang, when he got the script, he was so consumed and engrossed with the story that he told himself he really, really had to get this role. After three rounds of auditions, he finally edged out regional actors from Hong Kong, China, Taiwan and Malaysia to get the part. Executive producer and founder and CEO of FLY Entertainment, Irene Ang revealed that Zhang got the part because he really has that innocence and essence of Forrest Gump for Kheong is like a Chinese Forrest Gump - naive and very good-hearted, but not as slow-witted, so it was a great fit. The film also stars screen legend Nora Miao, best known for being the female lead in all three of Bruce Lee's Hong Kong films, and the only actress to share an on-screen kiss with the legendary Lee in *Fist of Fury*. - JS

SUICIDE SQUAD

RELEASE DATE: 4 August 2016

GENRE: Comics/Action

DIRECTOR: David Ayer

CAST: Will Smith, Margot Robbie, Jared Leto, Joel Kinnaman, Viola Davis, Jai Courtney, Cara Delevingne, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, Jay Hernandez, Karen Fukuhara, Adam Beach

SYNOPSIS: The world's an awful place and sometimes, old-fashioned heroes just won't cut it. The ruthless, cunning and manipulative government official Amanda Waller (Davis) puts together a team of supervillains to do the government's dirty work, codenamed "Task Force X". The team members are given micro-bomb implants that Waller will detonate should any of them go off-script. Military officer Rick Flag (Kinnaman) is in charge of wrangling the vicious bunch, which comprise assassin Deadshot (Smith), crazed ex-psychiatrist Harley Quinn (Robbie), pyro-kinetic gangster El Diablo (Hernandez), cannibalistic monster Killer Croc (Akinnuoye-Agbaje) and assassin Slipknot (Beach). By Flag's side is his bodyguard Katana (Fukuhara), a gifted swordswoman. Over the course of their mission, the squad comes into conflict with the Joker (Leto), a psychotic supervillain and Harley Quinn's one true love.

DID YOU KNOW?: DC is known for its supervillains, and Batman's rogues gallery in particular is arguably the most fascinating in all of comics. Writer-director David Ayer promises a twisted experience that will push the boundaries of the PG-13 rating as hard as possible. *Suicide Squad* heralds the return of the Joker, last seen on the big screen as portrayed by Heath Ledger in *The Dark Knight*. Jared Leto "took a pretty deep dive", never breaking character throughout filming the movie. The fan-favourite character of Harley Quinn originated in *Batman: The Animated Series* and has since become a fixture across all media, making her most prominent live-action appearance yet in this film. The *Suicide Squad* has appeared in the *Justice League* animated series, the TV show *Arrow* and the animated film *Batman: Assault on Arkham*. - JJ





THE SECRET LIFE OF PETS

RELEASE DATE: 1 September 2016

GENRE: Animation/Comedy

DIRECTORS: Chris Renaud, Yarrow Cheney

VOICE CAST: Louis C.K., Kevin Hart, Eric Stonestreet, Steve Coogan, Ellie Kemper, Bobby Moynihan, Hannibal Buress, Lake Bell

SYNOPSIS: Pets: furry, feathery, or scaly pals, boon companions, sources of joy, frustration and meaningful connection to many pet owners everywhere. What if they were living double lives that us human beings aren't privy to? In a Manhattan apartment building, a Jack Russell terrier named Max (C.K.) begins feeling neglected when his owner Katie (Kemper) rescues a sloppy mongrel named Duke (Stonestreet), a new challenger for Katie's affections. Max and Duke have to put aside their disagreements when an adorable, secretly psychotic white rabbit named Snowball (Hart) emerges. Snowballs is the leader of an army of abandoned animals who call themselves the "Flushed Pets", and he is determined to enact vengeance on all happily-owned pets and their owners at any cost.

DID YOU KNOW?: *The Secret Life of Pets* is jointly direct by Chris Renaud, director of *The Lorax* and co-director of the *Despicable Me* movies, and Yarrow Cheney, production designer of *The Lorax* and the *Despicable Me* movies. This marks the first animated film roles for popular stand-up comedians/actors Louis C.K. and Kevin Hart. Quite amusingly, alternative metal band System of a Down's *Bounce* can be heard in the trailer. – JJ



BRIDGET JONES' BABY

RELEASE DATE: 15 September 2016

GENRE: Comedy/Romance

DIRECTOR: Sharon Macguire

CAST: Renee Zellweger, Colin Firth, Patrick Dempsey

SYNOPSIS: What happens to paper diaries in the digital age? We'll find out, perhaps, in *Bridget Jones's Baby*, the upcoming third film in the *Bridget Jones* franchise. It seems like the lovely Ms. Jones (Zellweger) is striding into the digital age, iPad, and a baby in tow. One might expect the film to take its plot from the Helen Fielding book of the same name, but we suspect that the studio in charge is going a far less controversial route.

DID YOU KNOW?: Spoiler-phobes should turn away now – Fielding's book controversially killed off Mark Darcy, Bridget's one true love, and left the main character alone in raising their children. However, we know for a fact that Colin Firth has signed on for *Bridget Jones's Baby*, which means that the film's plot might well deviate from that of the novel. Patrick Dempsey is also on board, although Hugh Grant won't be popping up this time around. - SW



THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

RELEASE DATE: 22 September 2016

GENRE: Western/Action

DIRECTOR: Antoine Fuqua

CAST: Denzel Washington, Chris Pratt, Ethan Hawke, Vincent D'onofrio, Lee Byung-hun, Manuel Garcia Rulfo, Martin Sensmeier, Haley Bennett, Matt Bomer, Peter Sarsgaard

SYNOPSIS: In this remake of the classic 1960 John Sturges-directed western, the widow of a murdered man hires a band of seven bounty hunters to get revenge.

DID YOU KNOW?: While not much is known about the plot of this remake, it seems to differ significantly from the film it was based on, in which a Mexican farming village hires the titular gunfighters to protect them from marauding bandits. The 1960 film was in turn a remake of the seminal 1954 Akira Kurosawa film *Seven Samurai*. This remake was initially set to star Tom Cruise, with Matt Damon, Kevin Costner and Morgan Freeman rumoured to join him. This film reteams Denzel Washington and Ethan Hawke with their *Training Day* director Antoine Fuqua. Jason Momoa was cast, but dropped out to play Aquaman. The late James Horner completed the musical score for the film in secret, planning it to be a surprise for the director. - JJ



THE GREAT WALL

RELEASE DATE: 29 September 2016

GENRE: Action/Adventure/Fantasy

DIRECTOR: Zhang Yimou

CAST: Matt Damon, Andy Lau, Pedro Pascal, Willem Dafoe, Luhan, Jing Tian, Zhang Hanyu

SYNOPSIS: It is the 15th century in the Northern Song Dynasty and European soldiers who are in search of gunpowder journey to the east, coming across the Great Wall of China as it is being constructed by the Chinese. The soldiers then discover that structure not only serves to protect China from marauding Mongolian invaders, but also functions as a barrier to keep out frightening supernatural beasts.

DID YOU KNOW?: This supernatural epic is one of the biggest China-U.S. co-productions in film history, marking director Zhang Yimou's first foray into English-language movies. This is also the first English-language film for star Andy Lau, who last collaborated with director Zhang on 2004's *House of Flying Daggers*. At a budget of USD \$135 million, it is the most expensive film ever shot entirely on Chinese soil. Bryan Cranston was initially attached to the film, but scheduling conflicts with *Trumbo* prevented him from committing to *The Great Wall*. Production company Legendary Pictures has had success with *Pacific Rim*, a monster movie that incorporated many elements from eastern pop culture, so perhaps that will carry over into *The Great Wall*. - JJ



GAMBIT

RELEASE DATE: 6 October 2016

GENRE: Comics/Action

DIRECTOR: Doug Liman

CAST: Channing Tatum, Léa Seydoux

SYNOPSIS: In this X-Men spinoff, Gambit, aka Remy LeBeau, gets his time in the spotlight. The smouldering mutant vigilante hails from New Orleans and was kidnapped from the hospital where he was born, raised by the LeBeau Clan thieves' guild. Remy falls in love with Bella Donna Boudreaux (Seydoux), the daughter of the leader of the Assassins, a rival thieves' guild. Remy's mutant powers begin to manifest themselves in his teens: he can conjure up and manipulate pure kinetic energy, "charging up" objects like a deck of playing cards to use as weapons.

DID YOU KNOW?: Gambit has been a fan favourite since his introduction in the early 90s and the film is based on a treatment written

by the character's co-creator, Chris Claremont. Gambit was portrayed by Taylor Kitsch in *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, but producer Lauren Shuler Donner wanted to re-cast the part with Channing Tatum. Like Remy, Tatum was born and raised in New Orleans. No other cast members have been announced besides Tatum and Léa Seydoux, who beat out Rebecca Ferguson and Abbey Lee to the role of Bella Donna Boudreaux. Rupert Wyatt (*Rise of the Planet of the Apes*) was originally attached to direct, but dropped out and was replaced by Doug Liman (*The Bourne Identity*, *Edge of Tomorrow*). The film's March 2016 production start date might be too late for it to open on its planned October release date, so watch this space. – JJ



INFERNO

RELEASE DATE: 13 October 2016

GENRE: Mystery/Thriller

DIRECTOR: Ron Howard

CAST: Tom Hanks, Irrfan Khan, Felicity Jones, Omar Sy, Sidse Babbett Knudsen

SYNOPSIS: It's another desperate race around the clock/tour through art history as Tom Hanks returns in the role of Harvard professor and symbology super-sleuth Robert Langdon. This time, Langdon's skills are called upon to decipher clues that point to *Inferno*, the epic 14th Century poem by Dante. He arrives in Florence where he is joined by doctor Sienna Brooks (Jones). The pair have to face off against a deranged geneticist who wants to drastically reduce the world's overpopulation by way of an artificially-engineered virus.

DID YOU KNOW?: *Inferno* is the third film in the Robert Langdon series based on Dan

Brown's historical mystery novels. *The Da Vinci Code* was adapted for the big screen before *Angels and Demons*, and now *The Lost Symbol* has been skipped over in favour of 2013's *Inferno*. The movie version of *The Lost Symbol* was apparently nixed by Sony because of the plot's similarities with 2004's *National Treasure*. *Inferno* was originally slated to open on December 15 2015, but was pushed back a year because it clashed with *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Coincidentally, *Star Wars: Rogue One* star Felicity Jones is the leading lady opposite Hanks here. – JJ

DOCTOR STRANGE

RELEASE DATE: 3 November 2016

GENRE: Action/Comics

DIRECTOR: Scott Derrickson

CAST: Benedict Cumberbatch, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Mads Mikkelsen, Rachel McAdams, Tilda Swinton, Benedict Wong

SYNOPSIS: After getting name-dropped in *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, Marvel's Sorcerer Supreme is finally making his big-screen debut. *Doctor Strange* tells the origin story of Stephen Strange, a gifted neurosurgeon whose promising career is suddenly cut short by a horrific car accident. Strange uncovers an arcane realm of magic and mysticism that lies just beyond our own, embarking on a supernatural journey and facing otherworldly threats.

DID YOU KNOW?: *Doctor Strange* marks the Marvel Cinematic Universe's official foray into the realm of the mystical. The hiring of Scott Derrickson, director of horror flicks such as *Sinister*, *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* and *Deliver Us From Evil*, indicates that it might be tinged with disturbing overtones. Joaquin Phoenix was reportedly approached to play the title and declined, with Benedict Cumberbatch staring into the Eye of Agamotto instead. Mads Mikkelsen's role has yet to be confirmed, though it is speculated he might be playing the extra-dimensional lord Dormammu. Mikkelsen was originally set to play Malekith in *Thor: The Dark World* and was eventually replaced with Christopher Eccleston. Strange's sidekick Wong is played by, appropriately enough, Benedict Wong. The Ancient One, depicted as an elderly male Asian mystic in the comics, will be played by Tilda Swinton. - JJ





FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

RELEASE DATE: 17 Nov 2016

GENRE: Adventure/Fantasy

DIRECTOR: David Yates

CAST: Eddie Redmayne, Katherine Waterston, Alison Sudol, Dan Fogler, Samantha Morton, Ezra Miller, Colin Farrell, Carmen Ejogo, Jon Voight, Ron Perlman

SYNOPSIS: It's time to return to the magical realm of J.K. Rowling's imagination in this prequel/spin-off to the *Harry Potter* film series. It is the 1920s, some 70 years before Harry enrolled in Hogwarts, and we follow magizoologist Newt Scamander (Redmayne) as he arrives at the Magical Congress of the United States of America (MACUSA), for a meeting with an important official. When a menagerie of beasts escapes from a magical briefcase, Newt becomes a fugitive from the American wizarding authorities. Newt also has to confront the fanatical New Salem Philanthropic Society, an extremist organization dedicated to the eradication of wizard-kind. It is up to Newt to prevent the further collapse of relations between wizards and "No-Majs", the American term for a "muggle" or non-magic-user.

DID YOU KNOW?: *Fantastic Beasts* marks the screenwriting debut of author Rowling, who announced with Warner Bros. that she would be working on spin-off films set in the *Harry Potter* universe. David Yates, who directed the final four *Harry Potter* films, is returning to helm *Fantastic Beasts*, but the studio's first choice was *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* helmer Alfonso Cuarón. Eddie Redmayne was the top choice for the lead role, though Matt Smith and Nicholas Hoult were also considered. The name "Newt Scamander" appeared on the Marauder's Map in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, so perhaps we might get a hint of why Newt was name-checked on the map. Katherine Waterston plays the female lead and Newt's love interest Porpentina "Tina" Goldstein, a MACUSA employee. Elizabeth Debicki and supermodel Kate Upton were considered for the role. American alternative musician Alison Sudol clinched the role of Tina's sister Queenie, beating out better-known actors Saoirse Ronan and Dakota Fanning. - JJ



MOANA

RELEASE DATE: 24 November 2016

GENRE: Animation

DIRECTORS: Ron Clements, John Musker

VOICE CAST: Auli'i Cravalho, Dwayne Johnson, Alan Tudyk

SYNOPSIS: Disney transports us back to ancient Oceania with the tale of its first Polynesian princess, Moana Waialiki (Cravalho). Moana hails from a long line of navigators and is the only daughter of the current chief. The 14-year-old girl sets sail on an epic journey with a demi-god, Maui (Johnson) in an effort to complete her parents' epic quest to locate a fabled island in the Pacific Ocean.

DID YOU KNOW?: Directors Ron Clements and John Musker, Disney veterans who have directed *Aladdin*, *Hercules*, *The Great Mouse Detective* and most famously *The Little Mermaid*, return to the ocean with *Moana*. They co-wrote the screenplay with New Zealand director Taika Waititi, who is directing a different film drawing on ancient myth in the form of *Thor: Ragnarok*. Oceanic music group Te Vaka, film composer Mark Mancina and Broadway composer/lyricist/librettist Lin-Manuel Miranda will be contributing to *Moana*'s soundtrack. We got to hear the multi-talented Dwayne Johnson sing and play the ukulele in *Journey 2 The Mysterious Island*, and he will get to show off his pipes again as the barrel-chested demigod Maui. - JJ



PASSENGERS

RELEASE DATE: 22 December 2016

GENRE: Science Fiction/Adventure

DIRECTOR: Morten Tyldum

CAST: Jennifer Lawrence, Chris Pratt, Michael Sheen, Laurence Fishburne

SYNOPSIS: On board a spacecraft bound for a far off colony planet, transporting thousands of passengers on a long-distance voyage, a stasis chamber malfunctions. As a result, Jim Preston (Pratt) is accidentally awoken 60 years ahead of schedule. Fearing that he will grow old and die alone aboard the ship, Jim eventually decides to awaken another passenger, named Aurora (Lawrence), to keep him company.

DID YOU KNOW?: The screenplay by Jon Spaihts was included in the Black List of most-liked scripts in Hollywood back in 2007. Originally, Keanu Reeves was attached to star and produce, with Reese Witherspoon as the female lead. That iteration fell through and Spaihts went on to write other films, including *Prometheus* and *Doctor Strange*. Sony eventually won a bidding war for the script, with Morten Tyldum (*The Imitation Game*) directing. When Chris Pratt was coming into prominence as an A-List leading man with *Guardians of the Galaxy*, many described him as a "male Jennifer Lawrence". So, it's appropriate that the two are co-stars in this epic sci-fi romance. Lawrence and Pratt were the top-earning female and male stars of 2014 respectively. While we haven't seen any stills or footage from the film yet, we know the promotional interviews with the duo are going to be entertaining. - JJ





STAR WARS: ROGUE ONE

RELEASE DATE: 15 December 2016

GENRE: Sci-fi/Action/Adventure

DIRECTOR: Gareth Edwards

CAST: Felicity Jones, Diego Luna, Riz Ahmed, Ben Mendelsohn, Donnie Yen, Jiang Wen, Forest Whitaker, Mads Mikkelsen

SYNOPSIS: The *Star Wars* Anthology series, a collection of stand-alone movies set in the *Star Wars* universe, kicks off with *Rogue One*. Set shortly before the events of *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*, *Rogue One* focuses on a ragtag band of Rebel pilots and operatives embarking on a daring mission to steal the plans for the

Imperial superweapon known as the Death Star.

DID YOU KNOW?: Disney is planning to release at least one *Star Wars* movie a year, creating something akin to the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Running parallel to the main sequel trilogy of *Episodes VII, VIII* and *IX* will be stand-alone spin-off films. Films about Han Solo and Boba Fett are in the works, with *Rogue One* the first to hit screens. Gareth Edwards (*Godzilla*) is directing *Rogue One*, which seems to be like old-fashioned wartime spy movies in tone. With Daisy Ridley starring in *The Force Awakens* and Felicity Jones leading the charge in *Rogue One*, the new *Star Wars* movies seem to love badass English women. Donnie Yen was initially rumoured to have clinched a role as a Jedi Knight in *Episode VIII*, but will be in *Rogue One* instead. It has been speculated that the late Peter Cushing will make a posthumous cameo as Grand Moff Tarkin via CGI. - JJ



ASSASSIN'S CREED

RELEASE DATE: 22 December 2016

GENRE: Sci-fi/Adventure

DIRECTOR: Justin Kurzel

CAST: Michael Fassbender, Marion Cotillard, Michael Kenneth Williams, Ariane Labed, Jeremy Irons, Brendan Gleeson

SYNOPSIS: A secret war has been waged in the shadows, a centuries-long struggle that has shaped the history of the world - a war between two secret societies known as the Assassins and the Knights Templar. Callum Lynch (Fassbender) discovers that he is the descendant of Aguilar de Agororobo (also Fassbender), an Assassin in 15th Century Spain fighting in the Spanish Inquisition. Callum is experimented upon by Abstergo Industries, whose CEO Alan Rikkin (Irons) has developed a virtual reality machine called the Animus. While inside the Animus, Callum is able to relive the genetic memories of Aguilar and use his newfound knowledge to battle the Templars in the present day.

DID YOU KNOW?: *Assassin's Creed* is based on the successful video game franchise of the same name. The extent to which Ubisoft, the developer and publisher of the series, is involved in the film's production is unprecedented in the history of video game movies. Instead of directly adapting the sprawling

story of Desmond Miles, whose ancestry is explored over multiple games, the *Assassin's Creed* film will feature an original story set in the same world. Fassbender was initially thought to be portraying Desmond, but will instead be playing a new character, Callum Lynch. Fassbender is not a gamer himself, but was intrigued by the franchise's premise of reliving past lives. The star and producer has director Justin Kurzel, co-star Marion Cotillard and cinematographer Adam Arkapaw returning from *Macbeth*, in which Fassbender played the title role. Ubisoft tweeted out Alan Rikkin's business card; fans who called the number were greeted with a voicemail recorded by actor Jeremy Irons. - JJ





WTF

WE TALK FILMS

THE FINEST HOURS

The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen

HOW TO BE SINGLE

If You're Not Having Fun, You're Not Doing It Right!

ANOMALISA

Animated Anomaly

KUNGFU PANDA 3

Don't Mess With Tigress Jolie

DEV PATEL

From Skins To Infinity

And More...

DEADPOOL

Ryan Reynolds Talks Dirty & Shoots Loads, We Like!

ANIMATED ANOMALY

In Charlie Kaufman's latest mind-bending stop-motion animated film, *ANOMALISA*, Jennifer Jason Leigh plays the title character, Lisa Hesselman. Leigh chats exclusively with *F**** about the unique appeal of stop-motion animation and her delight at being a part of this groundbreaking movie.



On the film evolving from a stage play

[Writer-director Charlie Kaufman] gave this to David Thewlis, Tom Noonan and I. We did it in Royce Hall for only two nights, and I love playing Lisa so much. I found her to be a very beautiful character. I love the piece so much and I was sad when it was over. There were rumours that we were going to Australia; everyone was excited about that but it didn't end up happening. I just kept thinking about it and then, one day, Charlie called me and said that he wanted to do a stop-motion animated movie. I was very excited about that possibility. That was two years ago!

On the film being a stop-motion animation

I was tremendously excited about it, and I think it's a perfect marriage for this, because there will be no way to do this in live-action. I have always loved stop-motion animation. It reminds me of a lot of things I was attracted to as a child, because it's so tactile. You really feel like you're watching creatures move in real space, where there will be people and animals. There is something very real and unreal about it at the same time. It's evocative and has an immediate emotional pull. For this piece, stop-motion is perfect, since Tom is voicing everyone else so that they can all look and sound the same.

On the film being ground-breaking

I walked in and felt like I was seeing a movie for the first time in my life, like I've never seen films before. It's kind of ground-breaking. You feel like that when you're watching it, like [it's] something you've never seen before, and it's affecting you in a completely other way. First of all, the writing and filmmaking is just so beautiful, but there's something about the fact that they are puppets and are dealing with things that we all felt or experienced in one form or another. And because they are puppets, we project ourselves on them in a way that you can't, maybe, as a real person.

On what the film is about

It's about a man who is feeling alienated and lost. He doesn't understand why he keeps losing people that he loves, why he can't keep

relationships or why he feels so alienated. Then began the hope that maybe he can have something in his life.

On her character

In a certain way, Lisa is very ordinary, simple and straightforward. She's incredibly self-deprecating, a little shy and nervous. She also knows who she is and accepts her world. She has made peace with all the things she thinks describes herself, whether they are unflattering or not. And whether they are true or not, she has found her peace in them. She's one of the loveliest characters I have ever had the chance to play.

On voicing a stop-motion character

It's wonderful! It's so free in a way because, as an actor, you can go inward and remain very focused, yet still communicate and have these very intimate scenes. The nature of doing it in the dark is so intimate and so I think it lent itself to it.

On working with David Thewlis

David Thewlis plays Michael and I've been a huge fan of his for so long. I've known him for a very long time and I've always wanted to work with him. There couldn't be a better movie to finally work with him on than *Anomalisa*. He was just so damn good! He is heart-breaking and brilliant, and also a great writer. It's funny because we've been friends for a really long time; I just never dreamed that we would have an opportunity like this.

On Tom Noonan

He had an enormous challenge and he's so brilliant. He says it was hard for him because, on stage, he could do all these different voices, and you could see that it was the same person. In the film, he had to limit his voice so that you knew it was the same person vocal-wise as well. But he still plays every character differently! This kid is so different from that of the wife, the ex-lover and the hotel manager. I'm sure he limited his vocal range so they all had a very similar sound,

yet he created completely different characters every time.

On co-directors/producers Charlie Kaufman and Duke Johnson

I've been wanting to work with Charlie for so long. I did that part in *Synecdoche, New York* which I loved doing. I just love his writing and him as a human being as well. He's so kind, thoughtful, brilliant and funny. He and Duke Johnson work so beautifully together. He's incredibly generous. He seems so confident and I think he is, like he really knows himself. He can really share the stage with Duke, you know. He likes to receive and answer questions. He's a lovely man. Duke is so young, great, gifted and has also so much confidence. They just work together beautifully. They really did.

On the filmmaking

They had to move each puppet individually for every single motion, even blinks. It's just mind-blowing. You forget all of that when you're watching, because it's so good.

On *Anomalisa* fitting into Charlie's body of work

This movie couldn't come from anyone but Charlie. The imagination, the humanity and the creativity behind it... Who thinks that way, you know? Who can come up with these characters and circumstances? It could only be Charlie.

On what she's more excited about sharing with audience

The experience of seeing this film. I was so excited when they were having screenings, because it's a film I've made that I know everyone will love. It's not every time you make a movie that you know people will love. It's such an unusual experience to watch this movie. It's not only funny, but it is also really moving. It's completely new, like something we've never seen before. It's exciting for me to share it with people.

Anomalisa opens on 18 February 2016.

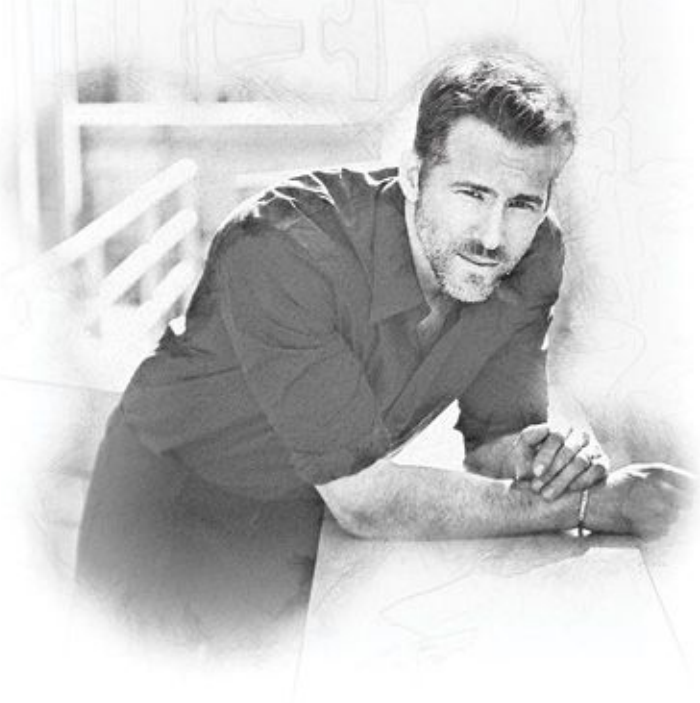


DEADPOOLING RESOURCES

*F**** chats with Ryan Reynolds about playing a very different type of comic-book character in DEADPOOL – a film that took close to seven years to make

By Joe Utichi





Ryan Reynolds knows a thing or two about comic-book movies. His first flirtation with the medium was *Blade: Trinity* in 2004, by which point the Canadian actor had established himself as a movie star thanks to a breakthrough turn in *National Lampoon's Van Wilder*.

It was his role in 2009's *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* that first put Deadpool on his docket. The Marvel Comics character, created in 1991 by Fabian Nicieza and Rob Liefeld, made an appearance in that film's finale that was supposed to set up a standalone movie. However, given that his comic-book alter ego is dubbed 'The Merc with a Mouth', it was a surprise to fans that his mouth was sewn shut for his climactic battle with Hugh Jackman's Wolverine.

Reynolds' love for Deadpool never abated, though. Indeed, doing the character right meant having a chance to atone for mistakes of the past: Deadpool is unique amongst comic-book characters for being aware of his place in the superhero mythos. He can break the fourth wall, and is regularly shown reading issues of his own comic book and commenting on the pop culture of the day.

Directed by Tim Miller, *Deadpool* tells the origin story of Wade Wilson (Reynolds), whose terminal cancer is 'cured' by the same Weapon X programme that created Wolverine, leaving him permanently disfigured, but impervious to pain and able to regenerate from his wounds.

Expect plenty of wry humour in the movie, directed at Reynolds' own experiences in the comic-book world, which also include turns in *Green Lantern* and *R.I.P.D.* The first teaser, which debuted at San Diego Comic-Con, came with a knowing voiceover: "From the studio that inexplicably sewed his mouth shut the first time, comes five-time Academy Award viewer Ryan Reynolds..."

From New York, ahead of the release of the movie, Reynolds talks about his love of the character's self-deprecation and the long journey it took to bring Deadpool to the big screen in his own movie.

Where does your interest in this character begin?

The comics were sent to me in bulk in 2004. I read them and loved them. I loved this character and couldn't believe I didn't know about him already. I became a little obsessed with the idea of him too – the idea that he's meta and breaks the fourth wall, and he's self-loathing and self-deprecating. I was pretty fascinated by it. But I think most people just didn't know what to do with it, because it was kind of obscure and odd and a very weird thing to turn into a movie.

Finally, we were given a little seed money from Fox, who paid Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick to write a *Deadpool* script. We all locked ourselves in a room for four or five weeks and hammered out what the story would be.

And then, it just stalled again, until they gave us a little more seed money to make a short presentation, which is what leaked online and that was what got this movie made. And the studio said, "You're going to make your movie, but it'll be for the catering budget of most superhero movies."





We said, “Fine, let’s go. We’ll figure it out.” Since then, it’s been about putting every last penny on the screen, and here we are. The studio let us be, and everyone’s been really supportive.

Isn’t it true that, in the *Deadpool* comics, the character had suggested you as the best person to play him in a movie version?

Yeah, and there was another comic where it said he looks like a cross between Ryan Reynolds and a Shar Pei. [laughs] There’s been a weird, pleasing symmetry between the comic and the movie, and it pre-dates my involvement with it.

There’s a lot of self-deprecation in the movie, and *Green Lantern* is a topic that comes up more than once. Was the movie therapy for you?

It was, and the studio has been surprisingly alright with all our *X-Men* and *Wolverine* references. I find you can always take the piss out of someone as long as the subtext is you’re taking the piss out of yourself too. The movie doesn’t ever really pick on any one public figure without alternatively taking a stab at Ryan Reynolds.

It takes a brave actor to put themselves through that.

I mean, I started in this industry not taking myself seriously, and I think I recognised early on – at 19 years old – that that’s what got my foot in the door. I liked having my foot in the door, so I wasn’t going to stop doing that. I’ve never taken myself very seriously, and there’s lots of material there to make fun of. [laughs]

Was the movie always going to be the origin story, and was Ajax always going to be the villain?

There were certain characters we wanted and couldn’t get. It all comes down to licensing, and Marvel owns certain ancillary characters. We did have Garrison Kane at one point, too, but Ajax was just sort of perfect. He fed into the origin story we were telling and allowed us to create a fully fleshed-out movie. But there are little Easter eggs with other characters that may or may not show up down the line.

Was it challenging finding the structure of the movie?

Well, it’s a very fractured narrative, which is always a tricky thing to try to do. You’ve got to go back and forth and let the audience know we’re going back and forth. Luckily, we’ve got a character who becomes severely disfigured so, when I’m not disfigured, we know it’s the past. But it gives us a lot of freedom, and the comics have been a huge inspiration for the writers and me and everyone else involved.

At what point in the process did Tim Miller come on board as director?

Tim came on shortly after the first draft of the script had been written. We’d met with about ten directors, and a couple of other guys were attached briefly. Tim just kept coming back with all this passion, but



people would say, "He's never directed a movie before." He kept saying, "I can do this, I can do this."

I think his great strength is recognising he's never directed a movie before. I've worked with some first-time directors who act like they've been to this big show before and they haven't, and it can be really frustrating. Tim asks for help when he needs it, and that's the most you can ever ask of the guy on his maiden voyage. He's smart enough to rely on his crew and that's a very wise quality. I'd have been terrified if he was walking in there like he owned the joint.

You've said Deadpool will be the last comic-book character you play. Is that still how you feel?

Oh yeah, I've had my spin around that merry-go-round more than I probably should have, and I feel *Deadpool* is something I've wanted to do forever, so it does to a certain degree feel a bit like a homecoming to me. And he's not a superhero: he's an anti-hero and something completely different. It speaks directly to the comic-book audience, and I'm for that, 100%. If it were a traditional superhero movie, it wouldn't be for me. They wouldn't hire me, let alone me putting my hand up for it. I've done it, I've played that kind of character, and it's time for someone else to do it.

In a way, it feels timely the movie is coming out now. *Deadpool* feels like a bit of an antidote to all the superhero movies we're seeing these days.

Yeah, and that's why we're actually happy it took so long to get made. It's coming along at a perfect time. I don't know if audiences are fatigued by superhero fare; I think that's subjective. They're still coming out to see them in droves. But, regardless, they're fluent in this language now, and it's a great time to be able to put out *Deadpool* because it's going to speak directly to that language.

Are you hopeful you'll be able to spend a little more time with this character, though, in future? It'd be odd to see him pop up in an *X-Men* movie...

Yeah! [laughs] He'd be calling Wolverine 'Hugh Jackman', so it'd definitely mess with the universe to a certain degree. But there are certain characters within the *Deadpool* universe that I feel could work for a future movie. I guess I could be so bold as to say that Cable is one of the core group of *Deadpool* guys that I'd love to see brought to the screen.

Given all the talk about the way women are represented on screen at the moment, Vanessa in this movie is a delight, and Morena Baccarin has brought a real spark to the role.

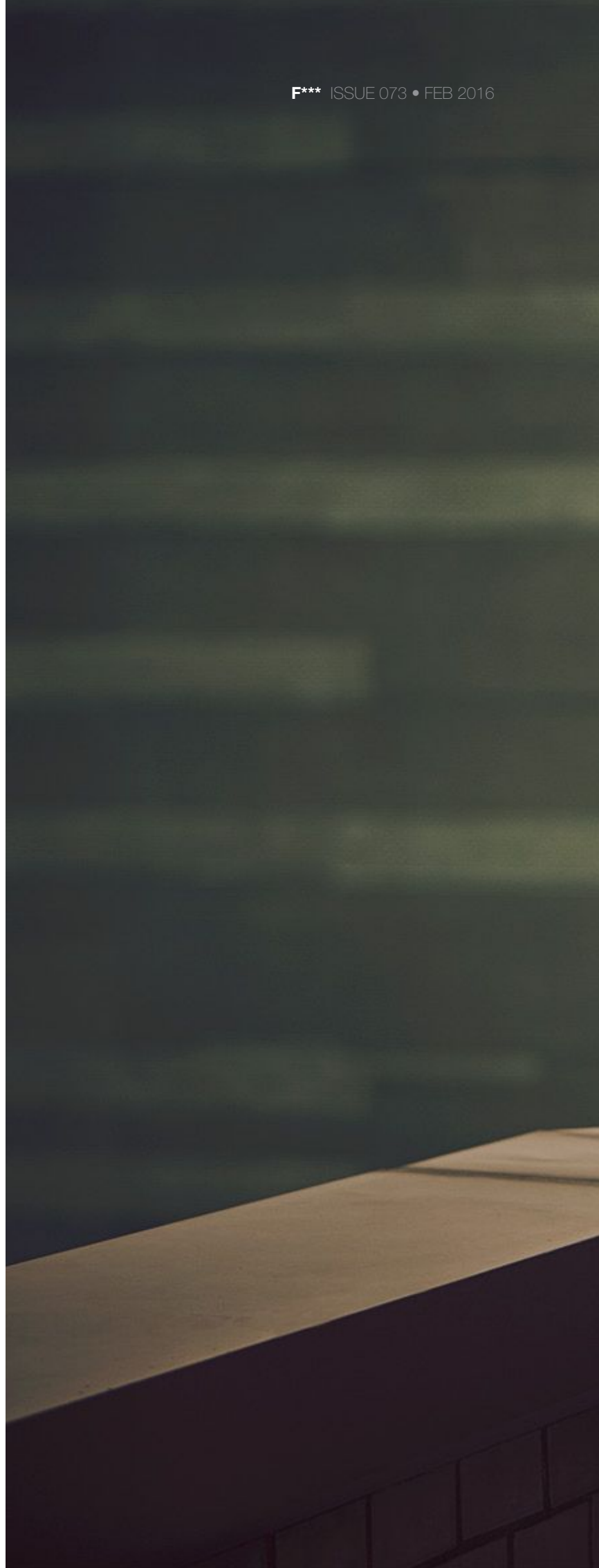
I think there must have been three hundred people or more who came in for that role and, with Morena, she just knew right away what to do. She's really great about ensuring she doesn't play the damsel-in-distress in a movie, and she carries that attitude with her the whole film. She's a delight for everyone, and the whole crew was sad to see her go when she finished up her scenes.

What kind of comic chops did TJ Miller bring?

There must be a thousand lines that are in the movie that aren't in the script, because, on the day, we just explored, and TJ is just a genius. He's one of the funniest people I know and he steals this movie. He's so funny and so watchable and I just wish he were in it more. We had days where there'd be 15 alts to every joke, and it started to drive Tim crazy because he'd start yelling, "I can't match any of this. I can't match it!" You can't just change everything, but we certainly made the crew laugh.

And I have to say, at the end of the day, Fox did not expect us to be the most functional set they had going, but we finished on time, on budget, and it was kind of a shock to them. We don't know if that was a good sign or a bad sign. We were like, "What do you mean, we could have gone over? We could have spent a couple more million bucks?" [laughs]

Deadpool opens on 11 February 2016.







FROM SKINS TO INFINITY

Dev Patel tracks his journey from British TV to international movie star

By Jedd Jong



Actor Dev Patel was in Singapore as a special guest of the 26th Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF), in attendance alongside director Matthew Brown to promote their film *The Man Who Knew Infinity*.

In the biopic, Patel plays Srinivasa Ramanujan, the legendary Indian mathematician who was plucked from obscurity to attend Cambridge University, where top British mathematician G. H. Hardy took him under his wing. Ramanujan had to battle not just the prejudice of the academic community at the time, but also severe illness as England was plunged into the First World War.

Patel sported longer curls and a beard, changing up his look from what audiences are familiar with. He was relaxed and charming while speaking to F*** at the ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands Singapore, but also turned introspective often, and we got great insight into his journey as an actor. Patel's acting career began in earnest at age 16, when he was cast as Anwar Kharral in British teen drama series *Skins*.

"*Skins* was a bizarre experience," Patel recalled, recounting how he was accompanied by his mother while standing in line for auditions as one of 700 hopefuls. "First day on set, talk about no prep or anything. We're sitting there – me, Nicholas Hoult, Joe Dempsie, all these dudes – and we're looking at Nick because he's like the actor going, 'Oh, wow!' It was so foreign to me." Patel said he initially had no idea what the phrases 'roll sound' and 'speed' meant, only being familiar with the call for 'action'. Patel fumbled around with a fake cigarette that was rolled with basil. "I didn't know how to smoke properly, it was all wrong," he said, chuckling at the memory.



For Patel, the experience was transformative, as he went from “being a nobody and not really being heard” to going on set with adults where his opinion was given weight.

“It’s like, ‘What, you care what I feel?’” Patel said he was “testing the waters” with *Skins*, and it was through the series that he was noticed by director Danny Boyle’s daughter and given the life-changing role of Jamal Malik in *Slumdog Millionaire*. Boyle had auditioned hundreds of actors in India for the role, but found most young Bollywood actors to be too conventionally heroic in their appearance.

Patel shared an anecdote about travelling to the States after the release of *Slumdog Millionaire*. “When I first went to L.A. and I went to [a] studio, they thought I was actually from the slums and had won a million dollars. They had translators and stuff. I was like, ‘I’m from London, dude!’”

When asked how he dealt with offers for stereotypical roles, Patel answered, “I think

‘stereotype’ is a word that’s thrown around quite loosely. I am a British Asian and I’m not ashamed of it. I spent most [of my time] growing up in school trying to shun the Indian in me. I didn’t think it was cool and I would do anything I could do to try and fit in in London.” Going to India with director Boyle to film *Slumdog* was an eye-opening experience for Patel. “I was like, ‘God, the girls, everything, this is a magic place! This is amazing!’” *Slumdog* “opened a lot of doors” for the actor and catalysed his own interest in India.

In the midst of his film work, Patel returned to TV as new media expert Neal Sampat in HBO’s *The Newsroom*, created by Aaron Sorkin. Patel also starred in a few smaller films, including *About Cherry* opposite Ashley Hinshaw and James Franco, and *The Road Within* with Robert Sheehan and Zoë Kravitz.

In 2015, Patel starred in three films: *The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, wherein he reprised the role of earnest young hotel proprietor Sonny Kapoor; *Chappie*, in which he played artificial intelligence engineer Deon Wilson; and *The Man Who Knew Infinity* as mathematician Ramanujan. This writer asked Patel which of the three characters he identified with the most.

After giving it some thought, Patel identified the common thread that linked the three characters: they were all outcasts in some form or another. “My default setting is being an outsider. I was never popular in school; I’ve [always] felt like an underdog, I feel like someone knocking on the door,” Patel said. “Deon Wilson is a guy who



people think is insane; he works for a company and has no friends and he creates this robot basically because he wants a friend. Sonny Kapoor is a guy that wants to outsource old age and creates this hotel. He's got this crumbling hotel and thinks he's a sky-high thinker and, against all the odds, he rounds up all these great British people and creates something. Same with Ramanujan: that's the ultimate underdog story and rise against adversity."

Patel revealed that *Chhappie* director Neil Blomkamp selected him to play Deon, even though the studio wanted to go in a different direction, because Blomkamp was drawn to the everyman quality within Patel. "I keep getting chosen for these roles that are far more intelligent than I am," he mused. Patel reasoned that he was "not intelligent enough" to be either Deon or Ramanujan, and went with the goofier Sonny as the character with whom he most identifies.

Patel turned vulnerable when he was asked if he had any advice for Asian actors hoping to break

into Hollywood. Looking back on his career so far, Patel said, "I think what really makes you as a human being is the 'no's. Straight after doing one of the biggest films that put me on the map, I did something where I got nominated for a Razzie," he said, referring to the disastrous *The Last Airbender*, in which he played Fire Nation Prince Zuko. "That informs me more as a human being than the highs."

Patel addressed the reality of being a person of colour in Hollywood. "Being an actor [in] a minority [group], you'll be constantly walking through doors where there's not going to be other people who look like you. There's always going to be a 'no'. It may take you more steps to get where you're going to, but you've got to keep your chin up, keep trudging along and immerse yourself in your art," he said, adding that it's important to "try to enjoy it if you can".

Patel is also devising his own material with a friend. "Create your own stuff, that's what I'm doing... if nobody's going to give stuff to you, make it yourself."



A person wearing a dark jacket is shown from the chest up, gesturing with both hands. The background is a blurred interior space with vertical lines, possibly from a window or a wall. The overall tone is dark and moody.

CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP

*F**** goes behind the scenes of THE FINEST HOURS
with director Craig Gillespie, who tells us about shooting a disaster movie
and working with Chris Pine in difficult conditions



What was it that originally attracted you to the project?

What I loved about this script is that it really makes you think about what you would do if you were given the choice of stepping up and doing something which takes a lot of courage for someone other than yourself, and I love that premise. There was a purity to the generation of men in our story, and they often did put others before themselves and that's what made them so heroic. There are a lot of thrills in this story and the scale is huge but, in the end, it's a very personal story. What I loved about the script is that Bernie Webber has so much heart – he's such an interesting, lovable character. He's the guy who you feel is not going to amount to much... and then he surprises everybody.

Tell us about the story.

It's a true story that took place off the coast of Cape Cod in February of 1952, when a massive storm with 70 mph winds struck. Two oil tankers were split in half and one of them was able to issue an SOS distress call, but the other one, the SS Pendleton, split so abruptly and quickly that the bridge sunk with all its communications equipment aboard and they weren't able to radio for help. The back half of the ship stayed afloat and drifted down the coast past Chatham on the Cape, where someone saw it and went to the Coast Guard station to report it. The tanker was trying to stay afloat, so they rigged up the tiller with chains and started up

the engines and beached it so they wouldn't sink and tried to wait out the storm. Then, one lifeboat, which was 36 feet long and built to carry 12 people and which no one believed could get out across the bar with the size of the surf that was resulting from the storm, went out with four young men aboard – in sub-freezing weather – to try and rescue 33 men on board the Pendleton. The story is not that well-known, but it is actually the greatest small-boat rescue in Coast Guard history. I read the script first, and then, when I read the book, I really enjoyed how very true the writers stayed to the events and the timeline of when things occurred, which is almost unfathomable considering all that was going on out there in the ocean.

Can you talk about Chris Pine's character, Bernie Webber, and his relationship with Miriam, played by Holliday Grainger?

Bernie Webber is this incredibly sincere, sweet guy, who has a very straightforward outlook on life, and Chris Pine has done an amazing job making him this lovable, sincere, honest fellow that you root for. Bernie is a coxswain for the 36500 lifeboat who was 24 years old on the night of the rescue, and he wasn't part of what you would call the Coast Guard's A-Team. When this disaster happened, the A-Team got called upon to go to the SS Fort Mercer, which was quite a ways out to sea. Bernie did

what he was told, even though everyone knew the SS Pendleton rescue mission was close to impossible. At the beginning of the story, the fact that he always does what he is told is almost a detriment, but as he goes through this journey, we see that he comes into his own and becomes a thinking man: someone who makes his own choices and becomes a true leader, and that was something that Chris was able to beautifully portray through the nuances in his performance. He really got to create a character with Bernie, using everything from his mannerisms to his accent, and the evolution of such a fully-fleshed character surprised me at every turn, especially because the audience views him as the underdog. We set him up that way, and Chris just makes Bernie shine on screen.

Miriam is this very independent woman – which feels a little unusual for that time period, but she actually ends up challenging Bernie to think for himself. Portraying a powerful woman is such a great opportunity for an actress, and Holliday does a superb job of maintaining that fine line between being strong but not too intimidating. And she's doing everything she can to try and help out from the shore in terms of dealing with Bernie's superiors and dealing with the town and rallying those efforts, while he's literally out on the ocean fighting for his life. The chemistry between her and Chris is





just beautiful, and you really are yearning for them to end up together. We wanted to be very specific, very clear and technically accurate and, in the film, we portray exactly how Bernie and Miriam met (their first date with her in that fur coat is verbatim from the story). Being able to get those nuances and truths makes it all more interesting and allows us to present such unique individuals, and both actors were so great at being able to run with it.

What can you tell us about Casey Affleck's character, Ray Sybert?

The interesting dynamic on the Pendleton is that, when it sank, all the officers aboard died. They were all on the bow of the ship, so there was really no clear command [in terms of] who should actually be in charge, and Sybert becomes a reluctant hero, the anti-hero. He does not like authority, and the dichotomy here is that, when the situation happens, he has to step up and rally the crew, becoming, in essence, the person that he detests. Ray has always avoided that by working down below in the bowels of the boat and not having to take on the onus of the authority and the weight of having to carry that responsibility. That's the struggle that we found so interesting, and Casey really did a beautiful job working through that, becoming a leader for the men and having to do that to save all of their lives. It's a fine line when you're working with an actor who has the patience and the commitment to the character which you hope will translate on screen, because, a lot of times, it's like these very small moments. And Casey takes his time with these interactions and just the choices that he makes as a performer, which don't seem obvious or exactly where you think he would be going. It just builds throughout the movie to make a very interesting, complex man who's got these issues that he's struggling through, and it makes the audience go on this journey with him in a way a director can only hope for.

Talk about the rest of the cast.

Ben Foster is playing this rough, tough guy; he's got all these eccentricities, which I love; he's brought such intelligence to it all. Ben is a contrarian to Bernie. He sort of informs the audience on how the rest of the Coast Guard station feels about him. You get the sense from him that Bernie is very much the B-Team. He hasn't earned the respect yet that the A-Team has at the Coast Guard station, and we see that all through the eyes of Ben's [character]. He gives him a hard time. He calls him on things and questions him, and then you see that respect that is earned throughout the film from Ben's point of view. And he does such a beautiful job with those touchstones throughout the film, and they have a moment at the end of the film that I think is just beautiful.

Eric Bana is a man with a strong presence, and it was great to see Eric manage to make [his character] a more insecure and unsettled person. He plays Daniel Cluff from the Chatham Coast Guard Station and Eric, who normally has this very strong, intimidating presence, plays this really insecure guy. Cluff has only just arrived at the Coast Guard station from Virginia. He hasn't proven himself in front of these men yet, and he doesn't actually know this world. He doesn't know the East Coast and the nor'easters and how it all works, so he's second-guessing himself, and we need to feel that throughout the film, because it was not a wise choice to send these men out... it turned out okay in the end, but a man with more experience probably wouldn't have done it. And so Eric had to bring all those nuances to his performance and he did an amazing job with it.

Can you talk about Andy Fitzgerald and Mel Gouthro and their involvement with the production?

I didn't actually meet them until they were on the set, so it was actually a little nerve-racking, but they were very modest about everything and just shrugged when anyone called them

heroes. It wasn't this sense of awareness of the life-and-death nature of what they did and the jeopardy that was involved... it's like it was unquestionable, like it was just the thing they did, which is how it was with Bernie. He said he never really talked about it afterwards, and that it was years before his wife even realised what a big deal it was. They just went on with their lives.

Can you talk about the epic scale of the story and what that entailed in terms of visual effects?

There are several scenes in this film that I would describe as rather intense. The 'crossing of the bar' sequence was a big topic of discussion and required a lot of preparation and a lot of research and development, and we really couldn't find any reference for that kind of CG work. It needed to look completely convincing, and it was really exciting to see it come together. We shot in a tank – since you can't replicate 70-foot seas – which was in an old shipping yard and built all of these sets. So, even though we're shooting against blue-screen, we had an engine room that was made of steel and was 65 feet tall that rocked with 10 feet of water in it. These guys were rocking around in a full-scale set with 2,000 gallons of water coming down through the windows. So they were very much in an environment that was quite brutal, but which helped inform their performance.

What do you hope audiences take away from the film?

An appreciation of what these men went through. I think it's going to be surprising for the audience to be able to sit in this world and be in the space that they were in, especially in 3D. It's all-consuming, and I hope we really captured the enormity of it and what they went through.

The Finest Hours opens on 18 February 2016.







SINGLED OUT

Join *F**** for this exclusive behind-the-scenes look at *HOW TO BE SINGLE*, the upcoming raucous comedy about living, loving and leading the single life in New York City – starring Rebel Wilson, Dakota Johnson, Leslie Mann and Alison Brie



It's a wet night in Manhattan – not the time or place you'd expect to see Rebel Wilson wriggling out of a taxi-cab window, but that's exactly what the Australian comic dynamo is doing.

Completely upside-down, she claws, kicks and crab-walks her way onto the sidewalk, and then scrambles to her feet.

"We have to get her out of there!" she shouts, thrusting her hands back through the window to "rescue" Leslie Mann, with Dakota Johnson helping from inside the locked cab. But before anyone else can attempt the same window dive, the call of "Cut!" allows this celebrated trio of actors to drop out of character and burst out laughing. Soon, the laughter spreads like a virus through the crew and among onlookers watching from a distance.

It's just another night on the set of upcoming comedy *How To Be Single* – where a simple line of blocking can quickly evolve into an elaborate stunt. "It was a lot of fun," Wilson quips as she and the camera crew head back to their marks. "Let's just say we're putting our bodies on the line for this movie."

With her quick wit and trademark Aussie delivery, Wilson is lightning in a bottle, whether late at night on the streets of the city's

Meatpacking District or onscreen in films like *Bridesmaids* and the *Pitch Perfect* movies. But she's not the only one. Also bringing their comedic chops are her scene-mates: Johnson – plunging back into comedy after her dramatic breakout hit, *Fifty Shades Of Grey* – and the always hilarious Mann (*Knocked Up*, *Vacation*), along with Damon Wayans Jr. (*Let's Be Cops*), Anders Holm (TV's *Workaholics*), Alison Brie (*The LEGO Movie*), Nicholas Braun (*The Watch*), Jake Lacy (HBO's *Girls*) and Jason Mantzoukas (*Neighbors*).

Having populated *How To Be Single* with a ridiculous amount of comedic talent, filmmaker Christian Ditter – the German-born director of recent indie hit *Love, Rosie* – tells us half the challenge of this shoot is keeping a straight face. "There have been some shots where the image starts to shake, and we realise that the camera operator was giggling. We've shot so much funny stuff, we could edit a sequel just of the deleted material we got from this one."

Hitting theatres beginning on Valentine's Day, *How To Be Single* follows a handful of interconnected characters navigating the ever-shifting set of codes, customs, rituals, apps and emojis of contemporary single life in New York City.

Johnson stars as Alice, who sets the adventure in motion when she takes a break from her college boyfriend to get her first real taste of the single life and is hurled into a hilarious crash course in the "right way" to do it from Wilson's alpha-single, Robin, who lives by the film's tagline: *If you're not having fun being single, you're not doing it right*. We also meet Alice's big sister, Meg, played by Mann, an obstetrician who is too busy to find Mr. Right; and Brie's Lucy, a college professor who has it down to a science.

But tonight's scene isn't about finding Mr. Right

or even Mr. Right Now – it's about getting Meg to the hospital, stat. To elaborate further would be a spoiler, but what happens between them illuminates the rebellious spirit at the heart of the film. "This is not a movie where 'girl meets boy and happiness follows,'" Ditter tells us. "I think a lot of other things can lead to happiness – friendship, finding yourself, figuring out what you want to do with your life... It can also mean finding a guy, or a girl, but not always. Our film is about everything that goes on in life in-between."

Given the filmmakers behind the scenes, that's rich ground for comedy. Producing *How To Be Single* are John Rickard (the *Horrible Bosses* films) and Dana Fox (*Couples Retreat*), who also co-wrote the screenplay, along with Abby Kohn & Marc Silverstein (*He's Just Not That Into You*), based on the book by *Sex And The City* series veteran Liz Tucillo. According to Fox, it's less a romantic comedy than a funny, edgy celebration of the single life. "We wanted to make a grown-up comedy out of an ensemble romantic comedy," she explains. "In fact, most romantic comedies tend to be about the romances; this is about being single, and your friends picking you up when you're down. It's about going out, trying to find 'the one' and maybe stumbling, maybe succeeding, because what you really have to find is yourself."

And the cast is fully on board for that journey, with each actor bringing his or her A-game to both the story and the comedy, which Fox says is especially potent between the outrageously comic Wilson and the stealthily funny Johnson. "Rebel walks this incredibly tight rope; she knows how to be larger-than-life but is also really *real*, and Dakota manages to play off that so well, with this wonderfully dry sense of humour."

For Ditter as well, the joy of working with such

gifted spontaneous actors is fusing their humour with the story and emotional through-lines of the film. “I think the best comedy spirals out of true moments people can relate to,” he reflects. “Our film is a comedy first and foremost, but it’s also a movie with a lot of heart, and what’s great about this cast is that they can pull off both – they can make you laugh while delivering those little moments that stay with you long after the movie is over.”

Months later, on a brisk day on the other side of the continent, we get a chance to sit down with the film’s four leading women – Johnson, Wilson, Brie and Mann – who’ve come to a Los Angeles hotel long after wrapping the film to talk about *How To Be Single*.

The conversation runs the gamut – from notorious dating apps (though only Brie confesses to stalking her friend’s Tinder, laughing “...because I like to watch others do it!”) to Mann’s kids to Brie and Johnson’s fun experience working on their previous collaboration, *The Five Year Engagement*, with Jason Segel. “That was my first comedy ever and I had my first moment of improv across from [Jason],” Johnson recalls. “They were saying, ‘Okay, just go!’ And I’m thinking, ‘I don’t really know what that means!’ But it was the most fun, ever.”

“Full circle,” Brie laughs.

All four were drawn to *How To Be Single* for similar reasons – from the opportunity to work with one another to the story’s irresistible premise. “I think that the movie is celebrating being single – for the guys as well as the girls,” Johnson tells us. “The characters are all so different and it’s fun to see all the ways being single can affect people – and it *is* funny, just as it can be funny in life. I think you can see everything in a dramatic way or a funny way. This is our humorous take on it.”

Right way or wrong way, Johnson’s own character, Alice, is the one who knows the least about how to be single. “Alice has always depended upon someone to do things for her and to make her feel good, whether it’s her sister or her boyfriend,” she notes. “She then has this enlightening moment, when she feels, ‘I need to be on my own, to figure out who I am,’ and sets about doing it in a roundabout way.”

Mann plays what she describes as Alice’s “workaholic older sister,” Meg – a great bit of casting as the two could easily pass for sisters. Mann tells us that she and Johnson felt an immediate affinity for each other, and describes her onscreen sister as “so sweet and an incredibly generous actor. We had a couple of long, challenging days, and she would just look at me with those angel eyes and I would forget all my problems. I’m happy and lucky to have her as an onscreen sister.”

“I’m a great sister,” Johnson smiles.

Alice starts her independent life by landing a job at a law firm, where she meets Robin, whom Wilson laughingly describes as “the party animal ... the beast! Robin is the eternally single



girl living it up in NYC. She knows who she is, knows what she wants, and goes out and gets it. She’s fiercely independent. She might also be other things... or maybe we’ll only see that in the deleted scenes,” she laughs.

Ditter has joked that Robin is Dumbledore to Alice’s Harry Potter. But Johnson feels that they both experience something of a coming-of-age in the film. “I think they learn a bit from each other,” she muses. “Robin is sort of a party monster, and Alice has never really done any of that. So Robin teaches her how to be more alive and not so afraid and, in return, Alice teaches Robin that being afraid can be a good thing – that there are times for quiet; you don’t always have to be ‘on.’”

If Robin is the unstoppable force in the story, Brie’s Lucy is its immovable object. “Lucy is very much *not* into being single,” Brie details. “She would like to get married as soon as possible, is definitely on a mission to find a husband, and is very intelligent. She’s created an algorithm and uses it on dating websites to weed out guys that shouldn’t be for her. She’s very strict and strategic in the way that she’s looking for love.”

Brie’s own thoughts on how to be single are to be “open-minded. I think you’ve got to kind of sample all the goods,” she deadpans, cracking up her co-stars.

“Yes,” Johnson laughs, “Sample as many goods as you can.”

Wilson tells us that kind of sampling is a sport in Robin’s world. “My character doesn’t have a love interest, but I did get to ‘pash’ quite a few guys in certain scenes. We had this big dance-floor scene and they put, like, 50 guys in a corner so that I could surreptitiously choose the ones that I wanted to kiss. I was worried that no one was going to volunteer, and one of the three I chose came up to me and said, ‘The fact that you chose me changed my life!’” she laughs.

While the actors loved diving into the combustible, no-holds-barred humour inherent in this tale about single life, they also share their director’s affinity for the heart of the story. “All the characters in the film kind of learn about what they really want, which opens it up to being in a relationship or just celebrating singledom,” Brie says. “It’s just about being happy with yourself, I think, and doing what you want to do for yourself before you let someone else into your world.”

For Wilson, that theme has particular resonance for this generation. “I’ve always thought that, if you’re single, you can go after your own dreams more and achieve more. When I was growing up, that wasn’t the popular thing to do, so I really like the message of the film – that it’s all right to be single. You shouldn’t feel a need to have to be partnered with someone to be complete. I think it’s a very hopeful message for all the single people out there.”

How To Be Single opens on 18 February 2016.

HEAR ME ROAR

Angelina Jolie-Pitt reunites with the rest of the Furious Five to voice Master Tigress in the third outing of the popular KUNG FU PANDA franchise, which will see at least three more sequels!

By Tony Horkins

In her extraordinary career, Angelina Jolie-Pitt has been a sharp-shooting assassin, a vengeful fairy, a grief-stricken mother, a video-game adventuress and a tragic supermodel. However, it's her role as Master Tigress, the cold, cool, super-smart, kung fu mistress who co-stars in the hugely popular *Kung Fu Panda* series, which has resonated like no other for the Golden Globe-winning actress.

"The idea of mixing *kung fu* with a panda is already just a brilliant and very fun one," she says from California's DreamWorks campus, "and I think it has beautiful themes that people care about."

Since helping to bring Tigress to life more than seven years ago in the original *Kung Fu Panda* movie, Jolie-Pitt has successfully parlayed her profile as one of America's leading actresses into a career as a producer and, more recently, director and writer. In 2014, she helmed harrowing WWII drama *Unbroken*, which received three Oscar nominations, and wrote and directed relationship drama *By the Sea*, which she also produced and co-starred in with her husband, Brad Pitt.

Despite her enormously hectic schedule – the 40-year-old is busy raising six children and has received worldwide recognition for her extensive humanitarian work – she returns to breathe life into the animated Tigress. In *Kung Fu Panda 3*, Tigress and the rest of the Furious Five watch as Po (Jack Black) is unexpectedly reunited with his biological father, Li (Bryan Cranston), and they enter a magical secret panda paradise together.

Co-directed by Jennifer Yuh Nelson and Alessandro Carloni, this third movie in the Oscar-nominated series finds our heroes battling evil spirit Kai (J.K. Simmons), who is terrorising China and stealing the *chi* of defeated *kung fu* masters. It's up to Po to train the occupants of Panda Village and come to the rescue.

"What's nice is at its centre, this one asks, 'Who am I? Who is my best self and what is that? How do we each discover that every individual's best self is completely unique and very different?'" she says. "That's a really nice message for children."

The last two *Kung Fu Panda* movies were the most successful animated films in the years they were released. Why do you think they're so popular?

Each film has its own thing in which you can find something unique. They're about family, and they raise questions like, 'Where do I belong?' Also, because of the influence of China, people get to know this other world; they get to understand a different place. There's a wisdom of the ages that comes out of these characters and, for a lot of children, it's the first time they've ever heard these things. It's very nice to entertain them and give them a bit of culture and a bit of grounding.

You mention China. The movies are particularly big there, and known for their accurate knowledge of Chinese culture. Have you learned anything about China through the process?

I think what you learn about China is that, when you separate yourself from any politics, you just see the history and the beauty and the landscape that is China.





Kung Fu Panda 3 is partially set in a new world for the series: the secret Panda Village. What can you tell us about it?

Po meets his birth father and is now no longer the only panda around. We learn about other pandas and where they are and who they are, and Po has to learn to understand what that means and who he is. Plus there's a fun, new element of a zombie attack, which kind of just throws in everything that kids like – zombies and pandas!

After all these years, what do you like about Tigress, and which of her qualities do you think you have?

I think she can take things too seriously – I think I have that problem [too]. I can want to be in battle all the time and take things very seriously and forget to have a laugh. It's good for me to be around Jack [Black], just like it's also good for Tigress to be around Po. It's nice to be with somebody that's so full of life and humour and music... in that way, we're similar. And she's kind of private; even though I'm a very public person, I'm quite private.

Do you like her?

I do like her, yes. I was very happy that I got to be her.

What do your kids think of her, and do they have a favourite character?

How can they not love Po? Though I've never actually asked them if they have a favourite. They're all different ages, so probably some will like the baby pandas and some will like Seth Rogen, because they've seen his movies, and some will like Jackie Chan... but everybody loves Po.

In Kung Fu Panda 2, we saw a softer side to Tigress. Does that continue?

She doesn't have a big arc in this one, but that's part of who she is – she doesn't change very much; she is consistent. When she softens, it's just a small amount. That's kind of true for the Five – they represent different things, different types of people, different personalities, so we maintain who we are as Po goes on his search. We do see a little bit more of her friendship with Po, but she still has moments when she wants to kill him because he still drives her crazy!

What happens to her over the course of this movie?

Through the course of the movie, she's fighting – her whole life is fighting and protecting. She goes through a period when she thinks she's lost everyone and, like in any good story, you have that moment when you feel that all hope is lost.

Do you personally have any influence over her destiny?

A little bit, sure. If there's anything we didn't like, we were not forced to do it and, as we do the scenes, we can improvise and say, 'Well, I think she'd say this,' or 'I don't think she'd do this.' We tend to pass it back and forth, and because there are so many of us in the Five, we tend to pass it to each other. 'Monkey would say that, it's not me.'

Is there much opportunity in the vocal booth to improvise?

I'm not funny, but I play around a little bit. With Jack, you get into it and learn how to do it a little bit. I can improvise as an actor, but it's very different improvising in a real moment in a real scene as a person [as opposed to when you're] just staring at a mic and only using your voice to tell funny stories. It's a different kind of art – Jack's better at it.

Do you get to work together much?

Finally, after all of these years, Jack and I worked together for the first time on this film.

How does that influence your performance?

The strange thing is, even when we're not together – because we know each other so well, and know the characters so well – we can imagine how the other would be. But it just made it more fun, more playful, enjoying the process together, being a bit goofy. I think we got a little silly, and maybe a few lines or moments came out of it.

Where did the voice for Tigress originally come from?

What's strange is I thought that, when you did voice acting, you were supposed to make a voice, and I came in my first time and started to make every strange voice under the sun. Then they explained to me that that's not necessary, so it's my voice, just in the deepest tone. It stays lower, stays strong, because she's so absolute – she never gets flighty, or curious. She's me right down the centre.

She's very calm....

She does have that thing that I do not have. She's very zen, very absolute. I'm absolute, but I'm not zen. Sometimes, you play a character and it's not adding things to yourself; it's more just stripping all the other elements of you away, and then you're left with that one part of yourself that relates. So you take away this and that, and that one side of me that likes to fight and is a bit stubborn... that's Tigress.

There are a few new characters joining you in this movie, particularly Kai and Li, voiced by J.K. Simmons and Bryan Cranston respectively. What can you tell us about the newcomers?

They're great! Bryan Cranston is very moving as Po's father – very moving. Certain people



really know how to use their voice and take it very seriously. Yes, it's animated, but take it seriously and give a performance; you can tell he's really committed to this relationship and bringing across what it is to lose your son and find him again. It's very lovely. And J.K. is just good-crazy; he's powerful, he's nuts and he's beautifully out of control.

Sounds not unlike Fletcher, his character from *Whiplash*...

His strength is in there, but it gets a little crazier, more fun. He's crazy and strong but he's having a good time.

For you, are there any frustrations or advantages to removing your physical self from the process?

I love it! I've heard some people don't, but I think it's the greatest thing. Maybe, if that's all you did, you'd feel restricted and feel like you also had other things to share, but, for me, you get stripped of so many things and you are just using your voice. So, as an artist, you think differently about how you approach and how you communicate with just one part of your instrument and just one thing. And you can come to work in your pyjamas – just throw yourself together, it's fine, nobody cares.

They don't video your performance for reference?

I feel like they have in the past, but not always. They know us so well now, it's weird... it's like they can almost start doing that funny thing that Tigress does that's now not me; it's her.

Do you think she looks like you at all?

I don't think so. I think she was created before I was even there, but she has developed my mannerisms, which is really fun. I think she has a way of standing and a way that's very upright. She has her hands on her hips probably more than I would care to notice. It would be scary

if I started to analyse it, how much they have adapted her to me.

Has playing her changed your fan base at all?

I was once in a hospital and a little girl had a Tigress doll, and I was able to go over to her and start talking to her. I think it just confused her, to be honest! 'Why are you mimicking my doll?' In my house, with my kids, it's something I can share with them. I can't share all my films with my kids, and they've jumped in on this one to be little pandas.

How was that for them? And you?

It was really fun. I told them they didn't have to and that it would just be a few lines for fun, and they're not interested in being actors, but they enjoy the movies. We'll be in this little, crazy world together, and it's a really fun world. If you can share it with your kids, it's so cool.

Is this their first time in a movie?

Oh, yes! And I didn't know how they were going to do. I didn't know if they were going to get quiet or nervous, but they all did it really, really well and then I said, 'Are you okay?' and they said, 'Acting's easy!' Now I'm going to hear about that the rest of my life. 'It's easy, Mom. Why are you always so tired?'

You think they might have caught the acting bug?

Maybe for voiceovers – they were very happy there were no cameras on them. I think they would have gotten really shy. But just the idea that you're going to do a voice and become a panda. How can you say no?

Are you generally a fan of animated movies?

Yes, especially the Miyazaki movies like *Ponyo*, and when I was growing up, it was Disney – *Dumbo*.

What makes a good animated movie?

I think what makes a good animated film is just making a good film, making a film that's about something that will resonate with kids and has great characters. Same thing that makes any film great. I think great animation studios know that and they don't rest on the fact that they've got a cute little panda. They know they really have to focus on story. To shoot a scene in a regular film, you rehearse it, write it, you turn the cameras on and you're pretty much done. With animation, they have to build the worlds and the plates and draw each gesture... it's a big, big process. Every single move is much more thought-out than on a regular film, and it could teach directors to pay more attention to every single frame. If you've made an animated film, I imagine you have skills that most directors can be a little lazier with.

Is there an animated movie in your future as a director?

I don't think I'd be very good at it. I'm fascinated by watching the process – I'm producing one right now called *Breadwinner*, and learning a lot about directing from *Kung Fu Panda*. When I first started directing, I was really shy and didn't understand storyboards and I wanted to be free with the actors, but since working in animation and directing now, I'm much more interested in the storyboards and how to really define your visuals and understand the visual language.

So you're saying that *Kung Fu Panda* has had a major influence on your filmmaking...

I guess so! Yeah! Of course, every film does, but I've seen the process for years that these directors have to painstakingly redo and redraw and reconsider, so I think it's just that respect for the details. So yes, as a director, I would say I'm influenced by [animation] directors. I should remember the detailed process an [animation] director goes through and how many decisions are made even before it begins, and have that discipline.

Finally, Jeffrey Katzenberg has said he's ready to do at least another three *Panda* movies... are you in?

We've heard it could go to six or seven. I'm on board, yes. I don't know where we're going to go with it, but it's a really fun journey and a beautiful world we live in in the film. I think the films are lovely and say really nice things, and then, every once in a while, we get to be in the studio together and meet at the premiere – this big, crazy, strange family we've developed into. It's really nice.

Kung Fu Panda 3 opens on 10 March 2016.



R(A)

REVIEWS ANONYMOUS



DIRTY GRANDPA

LONG LONG TIME AGO

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES

SPOTLIGHT

THE BIG SHOT

THE BOY

THE DRESSMAKER

THE HATEFUL EIGHT

THE REVENANT

TRUMBO

AND MORE...

GOING APE

IT'S THE YEAR OF THE MONKEY AFTER ALL, SO IT'S NICE TO HEAR FROM OUR REVIEWER THAT
"THE MONKEY KING 2 IS AN IMPROVEMENT ON ITS PREDECESSOR AND PACKS IN
A HEALTHY AMOUNT OF ACTION..." HUAT AH, EVERYBODY!

DIRTY GRANDPA

Genre: Comedy **Director:** Dan Mazer **Cast:** Robert De Niro, Zac Efron, Zoey Deutch, Aubrey Plaza, Julianne Hough, Dermot Mulroney, Adam Pally, Jason Mantzoukas **Run Time:** 102 mins
Rating: M18 (Coarse Language and Sexual References)
Opens: 28 January 2016

RATING ★★☆☆



You mess with the bull, you get the horns, and Robert De Niro's a pretty darn horny (r)aging bull in this comedy. De Niro plays Dick Kelly, a retired army veteran who's ready to let loose after his wife of 40 years passes away. Dick cons his grandson, Jason (Efron), a strait-laced corporate lawyer at his dad David's (Mulroney) firm, to drive Dick down to Daytona Beach for spring break. Jason is getting married next weekend and his fiancé Meredith (Hough) is constantly haranguing him about the wedding planning details. While dragged on a drunken, drug-fuelled rampage through Daytona Beach by his grandpa, Jason finds himself drawn to former classmate Shadia (Deutch). Dick has lascivious designs on Shadia's friend, Lenore (Plaza) – designs that Lenore is more than happy to oblige. Over the course of their misadventures, which include running afoul of the police and a local gang, some unlikely grandfather-grandson bonding unfolds.



It's pretty much all there in the title, *Dirty Grandpa* – this is a comedy built on the premise of a septuagenarian behaving badly. It's hardly the first movie mining comedy

from a dirty old man partying down; it's practically impossible not to think of 2013's *Jackass Presents: Bad Grandpa* on hearing the title 'Dirty Grandpa'. The jokes pretty much write themselves, and because of its predictability and heavy reliance on one-dimensional stock characters, *Dirty Grandpa* comes off as lazy and limp rather than raucously shocking. The moment certain characters show up, it feels like we're supposed to be filling out a bingo card. "There's the fiancée with arms akimbo, there's the friendly local merchant who's really a drug dealer and there's the old army buddy who's wasting away in a nursing home. Bingo!"

It's somewhat funny that De Niro and Efron are playing grandfather and grandson here, since Efron's

character in *Bad Neighbours* threw a De Niro-themed costumed party, dressing up as Travis Bickle. Neither De Niro nor Efron is terrible in the leading roles, mostly because there just isn't any nuance and they don't have to stretch themselves at all. Beating out Michael Douglas and Jeff Bridges to the title role, De Niro does seem believably crass and grizzled, but it's difficult to laugh along and cheer the character on when he's as sociopathic as he is. We're meant to root for Jason to loosen up and be less of a square, but what his grandpa seems intent on doing is essentially unravelling his whole life. It's the day after his wife has died, and Dick exclaims, "I want to f*** f*** f*** f***!" while air-thrusting. That's not a character who's "endearingly debauched" or deserving of the audience's sympathy. Also, show us a guy that has Efron's physique who is this stereotypically uptight and that fond of sweater vests.

The moment Hough's Meredith shows up bugging Jason about the colour of his tie for the wedding rehearsal lunch and similar minutiae, it's obvious that we're meant to root for the couple to break up before the end of the film. Sure enough, a rival for Jason's affections arrives in the form of Deutch's Shadia, a conservationist who hangs out with hippies. Deutch's ethereal beauty suits the role and an awkward/romantic karaoke duet will bring on the *High School Musical* flashbacks big-time. While Plaza is better known for her droll, sardonic humour, she's still pretty funny as the overtly libidinous, promiscuous Lenore, who it seems will stop at nothing to sleep with Dick. The thought of Aubrey Plaza and Robert De Niro getting it on is supposed to be so knee-slappingly hilarious that a disproportionate number of jokes are derived from it. It's not "gross, ha ha!"; it's just "gross".

Dirty Grandpa lives up to its title in that seeing De Niro drool over college-aged girls for two hours might well make you want to take a long shower. Even then, it doesn't push the boundaries of R-rated comedy – there's nothing inventively out there or that hasn't been done by similar movies before. By the time the sappy acoustic guitar music plays as Dick and his grandson have a heartfelt chat about Dick's mortality, *Dirty Grandpa* certainly hasn't earned the right to try pulling on any heartstrings.

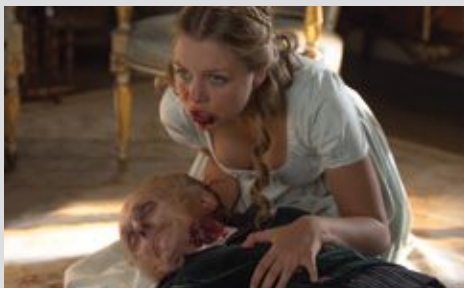
Summary: Crass, tired and always going for the most obvious joke, *Dirty Grandpa* is an old dog desperately in need of learning some new tricks.

Jedd Jong

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES

Genre: Horror/Thriller **Director:** Burr Steers **Cast:** Lily James, Sam Riley, Jack Huston, Bella Heathcote, Douglas Booth, Matt Smith, Charles Dance **Run Time:** 1 hr 47 mins **Rating:** TBA **Opens:** 11 February 2016

RATING ❄️❄️❄️❄️❄️



Something is rotten in the state of England – human flesh. It is the 19th century and a plague has befallen the nation, resulting in zombie hordes. Country gentleman Mr. Bennet (Dance) has ensured that his five daughters are trained in martial arts and weaponry to defend themselves against zombies, while Mrs. Bennet (Sally Phillips) is more concerned that they marry well. When the wealthy and single Mr. Bingley (Booth) purchases a nearby house, Mrs. Bennet sends her daughters to the first ball where Bingley is expected to appear. The girls defend the party from a zombie attack, and attraction sparks between Mr. Bingley and the eldest daughter Jane (Heathcote). Meanwhile, second-eldest daughter Elizabeth (James) clashes with Bingley's friend, noted zombie slayer Col. Fitzwilliam Darcy (Riley). Meanwhile, local militia leader George Wickham (Huston), who had a falling out with Darcy, takes a shine to Elizabeth. Elizabeth and Darcy must overcome personal pride and societal prejudices to battle the zombie menace and discover their true love for each other.

Pride And Prejudice And Zombies is based on the 2009 parody novel of the same name by Seth Grahame-Smith, who combined Jane Austen's 1813 classic *Pride And Prejudice* with zombie fiction elements. A film adaptation has been in the works since before the novel's publication, with Natalie Portman set to star as Elizabeth and David O. Russell directing. Alas, the end result doesn't have quite that level of pedigree, with *17 Again's* Burr Steers writing the adapted screenplay and directing. Portman remains attached to the project as a producer. Across the development process, it ended up that Grahame-Smith's follow-up novel, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, got a film adaptation first.



While *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* was criticised for being too self-serious, *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies* acknowledges its inherent absurdity more readily. It's not a dour affair and there is a great deal of winking self-awareness to be had, which led to this reviewer laughing more than he anticipated to. However, it's quickly all too apparent that this is built on just one joke, that zombies are having their heads blown to bits amidst all the Jane Austen refinement. This is how the idea was conceived: an editor at Quirk Books literally compared a list of "fanboy characters" like ninjas, pirates, zombies and monkeys with public-domain classics like *War And Peace*, *Crime And Punishment* and *Wuthering Heights*. Sounds arbitrary, doesn't it? This laziness comes through and the novelty factor proves insufficient in sustaining the film.

We've had Charlize Theron with a bionic arm driving a giant oil tanker across a post-apocalyptic wasteland and Emily Blunt in a mech suit fighting aliens, so kickass heroines are in vogue. In this film, the Bennet girls were trained in a Shaolin monastery and are proficient in various forms of combat. In one scene, two of the sisters engage in sparring practice while gushing over Mr. Bingley, speaking the original Austen dialogue. It's pretty fun.

James makes for an adequate plucky, wilful protagonist and the actress demonstrates her awareness of the type of film she's in. The *Cinderella* and *Downton Abbey* star is perfectly convincing as an aristocratic 19th-century Englishwoman fighting

social norms, albeit a little less convincing as a formidable zombie killer. Riley's Mr. Darcy is brusque and brooding, clad in a leather duster. Unfortunately, Riley and James share little chemistry and there's no flow to the progression of their relationship. Matt Smith showcases good comic timing as bumbling clergyman Mr. Collins, heir to the Bennet estate. In Austen's original novel, George Wickham turned out to be a liar and conman, if not an out-and-out villain. Things end a little differently here. Huston's pulchritude has a slight tinge of menace, which makes him suited to the role. Dance is a welcome presence as the kindly yet strict Bennet patriarch, but his *Game Of Thrones* co-star Lena Headey gets all too little screen-time as the eyepatch-wearing Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

Many readers have used charts and diagrams to follow the interwoven relationships in *Pride And Prejudice*. *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies* trips up when it tries to get through the plot of the story as quickly as possible so it can get to the next zombie attack. The genre mash-up isn't as seamless and confident as it needs to be to fully sell the conceit. Furthermore, the action sequences aren't particularly memorable. It's also lacking the raw sex appeal of, uh, Colin Firth.

Summary: *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies* is not the unmitigated train-wreck it could've been, but it's hard to shake the feeling that all the premise should sustain is a mock trailer on Funny Or Die.

Jedd Jong

SPOTLIGHT

Genre: Drama **Director:** Thomas McCarthy **Cast:** Mark Ruffalo, Michael Keaton, Rachel McAdams, Liev Schreiber, John Slattery, Brian d'Arcy James, Stanley Tucci, Billy Crudup **Run Time:** 128 mins **Rating:** NC-16 (Some Mature Content) **Opens:** 21 January 2016

RATING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It was 2001 and, facing great opposition, one small band of intrepid reporters uncovered the truth behind a string of child sex abuse cases. *Spotlight* tells their story. *The Boston Globe's* new editor, Marty Baron (Schreiber), arriving from Florida, reads a small column about a paedophile priest of whom Boston's Cardinal Law was aware and yet did nothing to stop. Baron assigns journalist Walter "Robby" Robinson (Keaton) and his team to go after what appears to be a much larger story. Alongside Robinson, Michael Rezendes (Ruffalo), Sacha Pfeiffer (McAdams), Ben Bradlee Jr. (Slattery) and Matt Carroll (James) comprise the Spotlight team, the oldest newspaper investigative unit still active in the United States. Because of the sensitive nature of the case and how strongly Catholicism figures as an institution in the city of Boston, the Spotlight team faces an uphill battle in illuminating the sobering, horrifying truth of the pattern of abuse that has been perpetuated by the city's priests.

Directed by Tom McCarthy and co-written by McCarthy and Josh Singer, *Spotlight* has emerged among the stronger contenders of the 2015-2016 awards race, premiering to "sustained applause" at the Venice Film Festival. As movie-goers, we're used to seeing fearless, heroic reporters ducking out of the gun-sights of assassins or going toe-to-toe with Lex Luthor, getting rescued by Superman at the last moment. *Spotlight* presents a portrait of real-life reporters and the good they're capable of doing. It's a cinematic embodiment of journalistic integrity and a measured, objective handling of a potentially provocative topic. There's nary a whiff of embellishment and McCarthy avoids a vulgar, sensationalistic approach to the subject matter at every turn. As the cliché goes, this is a movie about "men and women just doing their jobs", and the realism and credibility McCarthy brings to the film is just the right way to celebrate the accomplishments of the Spotlight team.

There's a nobility and a worthiness to the story being told, of course, but seeing reporters standing around the bullpen comparing notes doesn't exactly scream excitement. Cinematographer Masanobu Takayanagi, who also lensed the Boston-set *Black Mass*, adds just



the right amount of dynamism to the proceedings while restraining from distracting flashiness. There is a clarity to the progression of the story in the sequence of events without it getting too dry. At the same time, *Spotlight* never loses sight of the human toll of the case. A cleverly-edited sequence that intercuts Pfeiffer and Rezendes interviewing two very different victims conveys how many young lives were affected by the scandal without descending into hokey sentimentality.

Spotlight boasts a luminous ensemble cast who breathe life into unglamorous unsung heroes. Keaton doesn't get as juicy a part as in earlier award-season darling *Birdman*, but is still able to bring charisma to the role of the Spotlight team's fearless leader. Schreiber's Marty Baron is the outsider who is desperately needed to examine and evaluate the situation from a distance and, without his impetus, the investigation probably wouldn't have happened, or would at least have been significantly delayed. As a reporter who's less of the plucky Lois Lane archetype she portrayed in *State Of Play*, McAdams gets some excellent scenes in which Pfeiffer has to maintain her composure in difficult confrontations with victims and perpetrators alike. Ruffalo is the stand-out as the dedicated, passionate, somewhat awkward Rezendes. He mostly plays opposite Tucci's Mitchell Garabedian, an attorney representing the victims. Garabedian is prickly and

suffers no fools, but is ultimately well-meaning. Michael Cyril Creighton and Neal Huff both turn in affecting performances as two of the many victims traumatised in their youth.

A level-headed telling of the events that's not out to shock or function as a smear piece, *Spotlight* offers great insight into the way investigative reporters conduct their inquiries and the positive impact that their work can have. Sure, the quiet, even-handed approach favoured by McCarthy may sacrifice superficial excitement, but *Spotlight's* lack of self-conscious prestige-picture artifice is refreshing. *Spotlight* is more concerned with lauding the Boston Globe journalists than delivering a searing takedown of the Roman Catholic Church, which is just as well. Pragmatic without being detached, compelling without being heavy-handed, *Spotlight's* unassuming nature is the ideal reflection of the work ethic displayed by the journalists on which it focuses.

Summary: This account of the Spotlight team's investigation into the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic archdiocese of Boston is concise, fair, dignified and respectful, brought to life by a powerhouse cast.

Jedd Jong

THE BIG SHORT

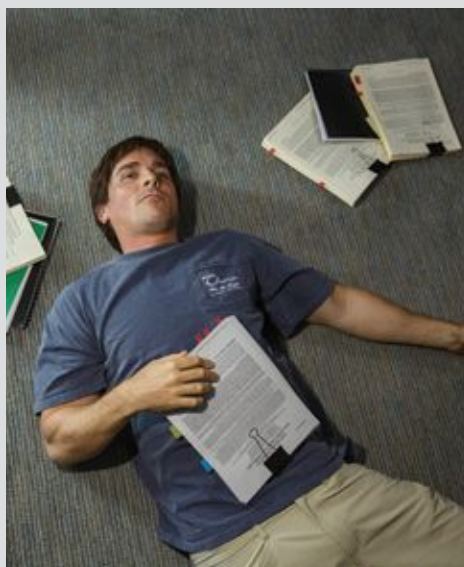
Genre: Drama/Comedy **Director:** Adam McKay **Cast:** Christian Bale, Ryan Gosling, Steve Carell, Brad Pitt, John Magaro, Finn Wittrock, Marisa Tomei, Rafe Spall, Hamish Linklater **Run Time:** 131 mins **Rating:** NC16 (Coarse Language and Some Nudity) **Opens:** 21 January 2016

RATING ★★★★★

There's really nothing like a nice little disaster to provide the wake-up calls we so desperately need. Take the 2008 financial crisis, for example. It took millions of foreclosures and defaulted mortgages for the world to finally realise how idiotic it had been to let the big boys of finance romp around unimpeded. Unfortunately, there's also nothing quite like the human propensity to relapse in the absence of constant stimulation and reminders. Seven years after the cataclysmic collapse, people have moved on to be terrorised by fresher crises (hello, ISIS) under the impression that the banking problem has been solved. Nope. That's where films like *The Big Short* come in. Smart, humorous and sobering in equal proportions, *The Big Short* will reawaken in you a healthy suspicion of your investment banker, all the while still offering up that elusive brand of movie magic by the truckloads. This is literally Hollywood at its crusading best.

Based on Michael Lewis' book of the same name, *The Big Short* chronicles the exploits of five doomsayers who anticipated the approaching apocalypse amidst a sea of derision and scorn: hedge-fund managers Michael Burry (Christian Bale) and Mark Baum (Steve Carell), trader Jared Vennett (Ryan Gosling) and upstart investors Charlie Geller (John Magaro) and Jamie Shipley (Finn Wittrock). Everyone knows what the ending to this particular story is, but far fewer know what exactly perpetuated the most epic global meltdown in recent memory. Let *The Big Short* enlighten you, as the five men navigate a financial storm with only their wits, business acumen and millions of dollars of investment capital at their disposal.

Don't be expecting some *Ocean's Eleven*-like grand team-up, though, even if Brad Pitt does pop up in a supporting role, as *The Big Short* is comprised of several separate trajectories that only meet on the grounds of prescience and a common desire to profit from disaster. Even the most altruistic of the central quintet is far from a beatific saint, a fact that the film milks with ironic delight as it conflates its protagonists with the morally bankrupt (heh) bankers they are set up against. The cast does a uniformly brilliant job of playing out their characters, all of whom are based



on real-life individuals, but the standout is definitely Carell as the apoplectic Mark Baum. Baum's frequent meltdowns and short fuse are the source of many of the film's best comedic moments, yet Carell is able to scale back the histrionics when required to portray Baum's vulnerabilities. It's little wonder that the Golden Globes have seen fit to honour him with a nomination in the Best Actor in a Musical or Comedy category alongside cast-mate and perennial awards favourite Bale.

Having a big-name cast is one way to get people interested in a film depicting events they'd rather forget and discussing such choice terms as 'collateralised debt obligations' and 'credit default swaps', but the film really does go to extraordinary lengths to break down the obscure financial lingo and reel in its audience. There is a palpable sense of purpose and advocacy, as if director-screenwriter Adam McKay has taken it upon himself to let ordinary people everywhere know exactly how they've been screwed over by the banks. This gives rise to a series of amusing vignettes wherein a bunch of celebrities are roped in to help demystify

Wall Street jargon with tongue firmly in cheek. The film is replete with such audience-endearing gestures (though Ryan Gosling does not take his shirt off), making you all the more receptive towards

the cautionary tale that McKay and company are spinning.

At its heart, *The Big Short* is just that. It's a cautionary tale warning against the perils of both unbridled greed and stupidity, as well as a scathing rebuke of the profligate finance industry. There's just enough humour and light-heartedness to keep an audience engaged, but the film never forgets its subject matter. Even when you're laughing at one of Mark Baum's raging-bull episodes or one of the numerous self-referential wink-winks, the fallout is never very far away. Especial emphasis is given to the plight of the man and woman on the street, the ones whose only mistake was trusting their bankers and brokers, but who ended up paying the price anyway. You will laugh and coo at how disarmingly clever the film can be, but you will also be filled with a sense of horror at how easily the promise of wealth erodes basic human decency. *The Big Short* balances its comedy, theory and advocacy to utter perfection, and the end product is a film that even Goldilocks would have no choice but to christen 'just right'.

Summary: Bankers suck. This film rocks. Go see it right now.

Leslie Wong

THE BOY

Genre: Horror/Thriller **Director:** William Brent Bell

Cast: Lauren Cohan, Rupert Evans, Jim Norton, Diana Hardcastle, Ben Robson **Run Time:** 98 mins **Rating:** PG13 (Some Violence) **Opens:** 28 January 2016

RATING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Creepy kids and creepy dolls have both been horror-movie mainstays, so why not combine the two? In this thriller, Greta Evans (Cohan) is hired by the wealthy, elderly Heelshires (Norton and Hardcastle) to be a nanny to their son, Brahms. Greta arrives at the Gothic Heelshire estate in a remote English village, where she discovers that the child she will be looking after is, in fact, a life-sized porcelain doll. Malcolm (Evans), the grocery delivery man, explains that the Heelshires treat the doll as if it were actually alive as a way of coping with the death of their son over 20 years ago. Greta finds it odd, of course, but the gig pays well enough. As several eerie occurrences transpire, Greta begins to fear that the doll is haunted by the spirit of the real Brahms.

The Boy is basically an unspooling of a laundry list of well-worn horror tropes. There's a creepy old house, creepy old people, a creepy doll, a protagonist escaping a dark past of some description and more than a few jump-scares. Director William Brent Bell's 2012 film, *The Devil Inside*, is infamous for its infuriating cop-out of an ending. While *The Boy* isn't quite as frustrating, its straight-faced re-treading of territory that should be very familiar to any horror-movie fan borders on self-parody. Bell strains so hard to establish a foreboding atmosphere, with shots that linger on stone angels and taxidermied animal heads, as Bear McCreary's ominous musical score looms and lunges. *The Boy* never passes up a single opportunity to remind the audience that they're watching a horror movie, coming across as self-conscious instead of authentically unnerving.

Cohan is a watchable actress, but she seems more suited to tough, ass-kicker-type roles, particularly since she's best known as Maggie on *The Walking Dead*. Greta is a very old-fashioned horror-movie leading lady, right down to walking down a dark corridor at night, holding a candle, clad in a towel. The way the character is presented is another aspect of the film that makes it seem like it might be a parody, as if we'll be hit with a radical, *Cabin In The Woods*-type deconstruction at any moment. Alas, this doesn't happen. There are multiple moments when Greta should realise she's in a predicament straight out a horror movie and high-tail it out of there;



the explanations as to why she doesn't aren't quite convincing. Evans is the charming, if bland, guy who provides the only semblance of normalcy in Greta's new existence, while Hardcastle plays up the frigid, well-to-do old lady archetype to an almost laughable extent.

There is a degree of intrigue to the question of whether something supernatural is at work or if it's all in Greta's head, though the final reveal is markedly underwhelming. Special-effects make-up artist Todd Masters created a very unsettling doll for the film, which should be half the battle won. We get a couple of decent scares, but those are offset by how formulaic it is on the whole. There is an archness to the proceedings and we can see what Bell is aiming for, which is at least sufficiently different from the cheap found-footage horror movies that are currently all the rage. That the film seems to be frantically waving its arms, yelling, "This is scary, isn't it?" during every other scene makes it less effective than it could've been.

Summary: *The Boy* relies too much on genre shorthand to be genuinely scary, in addition to giving leading lady Lauren Cohan nothing too interesting to do.

Jedd Jong

THE DRESS-MAKER

Genre: Drama **Director:** Jocelyn Moorhouse **Cast:** Kate Winslet, Judy Davis, Liam Hemsworth, Hugo Weaving, Sarah Snook, Caroline Goodall, Kerry Fox, Sacha Horler **Run Time:** 1 hr 59 mins **Rating:** PG13 (Some Coarse Language and Some Sexual References) **Opens:** 28 January 2016

RATING ★★☆☆☆

Revenge never goes out style in this dark comedy-drama. It is 1951 and, after a long absence, Mrytle “Tilly” Dunnage (Winslet) returns to her hometown of Dungatar in the Australian outback to care for her ailing mother, Molly (Davis). Tilly was accused of murder at the age of 10 and was exiled from the town. In the intervening years, she has become an expert designer and seamstress, having worked in Europe for high-fashion houses such as Balenciaga. Teddy McSwiney (Hemsworth), a childhood friend, goes about romancing Tilly, though all the other residents of Dungatar regard her with suspicion. After Tilly helps general-store clerk Gertrude Pratt (Snook) undergo a dramatic makeover, the women of the town become infatuated with Tilly’s *couture* creations. With the help of flamboyant police sergeant Horatio Farrat (Weaving), Tilly uncovers the truth behind what happened all those years ago and enacts her vengeance on the townsfolk.

The Dressmaker is adapted from Rosalie Ham’s 2000 novel of the same title. Director Jocelyn Moorhouse co-wrote the script with her husband P.J. Hogan; this film version sees the light of day after an earlier attempt in the mid-2000s fell through. A cursory glance at the title or poster might mislead one to believe that this is a run-of-the-mill chick flick. For better or worse (mostly worse), *The Dressmaker* isn’t that. Beneath the surface of immaculately tailored dresses, an unsettling nastiness is bubbling over and *The Dressmaker* has quite the caustic edge. It’s a twisted tale of small-town revenge that feels more like an askew Western than it does a period countryside romance. Moorhouse herself describes it as “*Unforgiven* with a sewing machine”.

The Dressmaker is refreshing in how different it is, but it is also vexingly difficult to place. There are wild tonal inconsistencies: this is a film in which a woman trips over a poofy skirt as she tries to keep her fiancé from seeing her in an embarrassing get-up; a policeman drapes himself in pink fabric and traipses about to the Flower Duet from Lakmé; and someone’s anterior tibial artery gets severed. Moorhouse’s fearlessness in going full-tilt weird is alternately novel and off-putting. The odd combination of broad slapstick and some shockingly dark moments makes it



difficult to get involved in the story, the overall effect being vaguely alienating.

Winslet as Tilly is inspired casting, and her performance anchors the sometimes-shaky film that surrounds her. Her turn as an old-school *femme fatale* with revenge on the brain is pitch-perfect and she has poise to spare as she struts about in an array of striking ensembles created by costume designer Margot Wilson. It is heightened and exaggerated, as the rest of the movie is, but Winslet manages to find some nuance here. Davis is captivating as Tilly’s dementia-addled mother, who seems at first to be little more than a crotchety old lady who’s not altogether there, but eventually emerges as a complex, sympathetic figure. Davis imbues the movie with genuine pathos – there are raw emotional moments which feel out of place given the absurdity of it all, but Davis makes them work.

Hemsworth fares considerably worse as Teddy, the rugged, dashing farmboy. While he does provide a good amount of eye-candy, he’s completely mismatched with Winslet, the burgeoning relationship unconvincing as a result. Teddy is also supposed to

be around the same age as Tilly. Hemsworth is 25 and Winslet is 40; it just doesn’t work onscreen. Weaving is quite delightful in a colourful supporting role, his cross-dressing Sergeant Farrat possibly having an even greater penchant for quality women’s wear than Anthony “Tick” Belrose did in *Priscilla: Queen Of The Desert*. A number of Australian actresses including Sarah Snook, Sacha Horler, Alison Whyte and Julia Blake help populate Dungatar with the peculiar people who call the town home.

The Dressmaker is an odd bird, a costume comedy-drama dipped in acid. Its third act is especially bleak, and that’s when everything comes unstitched. Moorhouse brings a great deal of style to the proceedings and this is a distinct approach to the source material, but *The Dressmaker* is too inconsistent and tonally confused to work.

Summary: While Kate Winslet shines in the title role, *The Dressmaker*’s peculiar, unpalatable sensibilities make it a poor fit.

Jedd Jong

THE HATEFUL EIGHT

Genre: Western/Thriller **Director:** Quentin Tarantino **Cast:** Samuel L. Jackson, Kurt Russell, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Walton Goggins, Demián Bichir, Tim Roth, Michael Madsen, Bruce Dern, Channing Tatum **Run Time:** 167 mins **Rating:** R21 **Opens:** 21 January 2016

RATING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Hang on to them reins, boys and girls, because Quentin Tarantino's wrangled up his eighth motion picture and is coming at you guns a-blazin', all shot in glorious 65mm. It is some time after the Civil War in wintry Wyoming, and bounty hunter Major Marquis Warren (Jackson) hitches a ride on a stagecoach occupied by fellow bounty hunter John 'Hangman' Ruth (Russell) and his captive, Daisy Domergue (Leigh). Ruth is delivering Domergue to the town of Red Rock, and the trio comes across Chris Mannix (Goggins), apparently the new sheriff of Red Rock. The four arrive at Minnie's Haberdashery, a stagecoach lodge, which is being looked after by Bob the Mexican (Bichir) in Minnie's absence. They meet the other lodgers: English hangman Oswaldo Mobray (Roth), ranch hand Joe Gage (Madsen) and former Confederate general Sanford Smithers (Dern). Trapped in the middle of a fierce blizzard, this motley crew aren't going to sit all quiet-like and wait for the storm to blow over, with mysteries unravelling, tensions mounting and lots of blood being spilled.

As can be expected with any new Tarantino project, there was a great deal of pomp and circumstance surrounding the development of *The Hateful Eight*. The script surfaced online in January 2014, inciting Tarantino's rage and a degree of finger-pointing as to who exactly leaked the screenplay. Tarantino briefly considered scrapping the film entirely and publishing *The Hateful Eight* as a novel instead. A live reading was staged before the film eventually went into production. Legendary composer Ennio Morricone came on board to score his first Western in 34 years and provide the first original score for a Tarantino film, the soundtracks of which customarily comprise existing songs. Then, the film was released in an old-fashioned roadshow presentation projected in 70mm format, this version containing an extra 20 minutes of footage compared to the regular theatrical release.

After all of this build-up, *The Hateful Eight* emerges as a film that is Tarantino's through and through, but is not one of the director's stronger efforts. With all the accolades he has amassed and with the impact his films have made on the pop-cultural landscape, it makes sense that Tarantino would be given *carte blanche* to create the film he wants to. This is a

spectacularly self-indulgent piece, and while Tarantino has made self-indulgence work in his favour in previous films, *The Hateful Eight* will test audiences who aren't already converts to his style. Near the beginning of the film, Ruth orders Warren to put aside his pistol "molasses-like", which is exactly the pacing of the movie. The 167-minute-long theatrical cut is already a challenge to

endure, let alone the 187-minute roadshow cut. The cast is peppered with actors who have worked with Tarantino before and the director's penchant for bombastic monologues and excessive, gory violence is in full force here. He has always planted his flag at the intersection of artfulness and vulgarity, and that flag is definitely still standing.

At its core, this is a mystery, with Tarantino citing the Agatha Christie classic *And Then There Were None* as a reference point. It seems like it would work better as a stage play, and Tarantino does indeed have intentions of writing and directing a Broadway adaptation of the film. There are twists, turns and reveals, but this is a more straightforward story than it is presented as, with the feeling of a tense, intimate drama being bloated to epic proportions, stuffed with over-the-top posturing and drenched in mostly unnecessary blood. Our characters arrive at a locale, are stuck there and a whodunit unfolds. The sometimes ridiculous heights that this reaches detract from the overall impact and suspense.

There are ingeniously staged moments of ratcheting tension that are immediately undercut by fountains of

arterial splatter. One can imagine Tarantino rubbing his hands with glee, setting special-effects make-up artists Greg Nicotero and Howard Berger loose on set, armed with assorted viscera. When Tarantino was paying homage to genres like the gangster movie, Blaxploitation or the martial arts film in the past, bloody violence makes more sense than it does in association with Westerns, even given revisionist works by the likes of Sam Peckinpah. The violence crosses past the point of being shocking into being pointlessly numbing.

Watching the cast at play is fun and, thankfully, there's a great deal of that going on here. This is an ensemble piece, but Tarantino's oft-collaborator Jackson takes the lead as Major Marquis Warren. We initially lean into rooting for Warren because, as the lone black character for the bulk of the film, Warren is the target of strong racial slurs, but his own volatility and detestable actions soon come to light, making him at once fascinating and repulsive. Russell's more understated approach is the ideal counterpoint to Jackson's style, and, for the most part, it's clear this is a cast who knows full well what they're doing.

Leigh is remarkably believable as the scuzzy Domergue, bad teeth, black eye, stringy hair and all, perhaps the most authentic of the bunch in mannerisms and appearance. Jennifer Lawrence was reportedly under consideration to play Domergue. Dern has a quietly commanding presence and carries one of the film's most powerful moments, a conversation between Warren and Smithers about the fate of Smithers' son. Goggins is entertaining though often bothering on annoying as he enthusiastically bounces about the set. Madsen puts in the least effort, though perhaps there's a charm in that stemming from the *Reservoir Dogs* connection. In addition to Mr. Blonde, Mr. Orange a.k.a., Tim Roth is also present.

Tatum's appearance, however brief, completely pulled this reviewer out of the film. The actor has stumbled awkwardly through many a dramatic role and the ruthless badass Tatum plays in *The Hateful Eight* doesn't capitalise on any of his comedic strengths. Stunt performer and actress Zoë Bell, a Tarantino mainstay, also has a minor supporting role. Bell's New Zealand accent is acknowledged, but that doesn't make it any less out of place in the setting.

For fans of Tarantino's technique and style and those who have enjoyed dissecting his back-catalogue and devising theories about how the events of all his films are connected, *The Hateful Eight* will be a largely fulfilling experience. However, if the wanton violence and odes to specific pop-culture ephemera in his previous movies were alienating, *The Hateful Eight* is all the more so. It is generally true that a director making a film for himself is better than a hired gun just cashing a check, but *The Hateful Eight* feels like it was made primarily for Tarantino's own amusement and, if the general audience happens to like it, it's mostly because they've been conditioned by the director's own oeuvre.

Summary: *The Hateful Eight* is packed with its director's signature flair, but it often feels saturated and overwhelmingly self-indulgent, with a cloud of "you're supposed to like this because it's Tarantino" hanging over it.

Jedd Jong

TRUMBO

Genre: Drama **Director:** Jay Roach **Cast:** Bryan Cranston, Diane Lane, Helen Mirren, Louis C.K., Elle Fanning, John Goodman, Michael Stuhlbarg, Alan Tudyk, Adewale Akinnouye-Agbaje, Dean O’Gorman, David James Elliott, Christian Berkel
Run Time: 124 mins **Rating:** PG13 (Coarse Language)
Opens: 25 February 2016

RATING ★★☆☆☆

How agonising would it be to write something spectacular and widely-lauded, yet be forcibly denied credit? This reviewer wouldn’t know, because he’s never written anything nearly that good, but Dalton Trumbo (Cranston) certainly knew that feeling.

It is the late 1940s in Hollywood, and Trumbo is highly in demand as a screenwriter. He is a member of the American Communist Party and is one of the “Hollywood ten”, a group of screenwriters subpoenaed to testify before Congress. Trumbo is ostracised as his relationship with his wife Cleo (Lane) and three children is put under immense strain. Trumbo becomes a target of gossip columnist Hedda Hopper (Mirren) and is disavowed by his friend, actor Edward G. Robinson (Stuhlbarg), so Robinson can protect his own career. Trumbo is unable to find work after being blacklisted, so he lets his friend Ian McLellan Hunter (Tudyk) take credit for *Roman Holiday*, which eventually wins an Academy Award. Gradually, rumours begin to swirl surrounding Trumbo’s clandestine ghost-writing. As the likes of Kirk Douglas (O’Gorman) and Otto Preminger (Berkel) hire Trumbo to craft screenplays for them, Trumbo inches closer to finally getting the credit he is due.

It’s no secret that Hollywood loves movies about itself and, as a biopic about a prominent Hollywood figure, set against the backdrop of Cold War political turmoil, *Trumbo* does come off as Oscar bait. It’s a noble story of a stridently principled and talented man who risks everything to stand by his ideals. It is the hope of the filmmakers that audiences at large will find something in this story to identify with, because *Trumbo* often plays a little too “inside baseball” to be readily accessible. It’s not a difficult story to understand, and Dalton Trumbo does deserve to have his story told, but if one isn’t that big a cinephile, specifically of the era in Hollywood during which Trumbo and his peers were active, *Trumbo* can be difficult to get into. This might sound disparaging and rest assured we don’t mean it that way, but *Trumbo* does feel like a film made for HBO. Director Jay Roach and star Cranston will next collaborate on one such HBO film: Lyndon B. Johnson biopic *All The Way*.



John McNamara adapted the biography, *Dalton Trumbo*, by Bruce Alexander Cook into this film. It seems that any writer tackling a script about a titan in the same field would be painting a target of considerable size on his own back. Adding to the risk is the fact that such revered classics as *Roman Holiday*, *The Brave One* and *Spartacus* are not only referred to, but are key components of the story. There is a righteous indignation that McNamara brings out in his script, but Trumbo says in a speech that there were “no heroes and villains” while the witch-hunt for “commies” was ongoing, yet several characters do feel exaggerated in the name of artistic license. Roach is known for helming comedies such as the *Austin Powers* and *Meet The Parents* trilogies as well as *Borat* and *The Campaign*. Perhaps the closest he’s come to directing a drama is HBO film *Game Change*, about Sarah Palin’s vice-presidential bid. While there are no

obvious missteps in his direction, perhaps the material could have benefited from a defter touch.

The ace up *Trumbo*’s sleeve is Trumbo himself, brilliantly portrayed by Cranston. For audiences who only knew him as bumbling dad Hal from *Malcolm In The Middle*, Cranston made the world collectively drop its jaws with his staggering, indelible Walter White in *Breaking Bad*. Cranston’s Trumbo is not a boring hero; he can be frustratingly stubborn and ornery, but that twinkle in his eye and the spark of true giftedness draws us to him.

Leading the supporting cast, Lane is wonderfully convincing as a woman of the 1950s. She handles the role, particularly the scenes in which Cleo confronts her husband about being swallowed up by his ghost-writing and becoming hostile towards his family, with strength and grace. Elle Fanning portrays Trumbo’s eldest daughter, Nikola, and her relationship with her father is contentious but understandably so. Louis C.K. and Alan Tudyk, both more often associated with comedic roles, both deliver solid dramatic turns. O’Gorman and Berkel’s impressions of Kirk Douglas and Otto Preminger respectively are entertaining and just broad enough. Goodman is charismatically boorish and Mirren chomps down on the role of the catty, flamboyant gossip columnist with great relish.

Trumbo is a biographical drama set in Hollywood with a talented actor in the lead role just waiting for the kudos to roll on in. In that regard, it’s a safe, albeit not especially satisfying, awards season offering. For those already enamoured with the period, the ’50s style and décor might be eye-catching, but Roach doesn’t do quite enough to hook the audience in and transport them right into the thick of ’50s Hollywood. There’s earnestness aplenty, but a disappointing lack of pizzazz.

Summary: Star Bryan Cranston is firing on all cylinders, but because it is only moderately successful at breathing life into the history it depicts, *Trumbo* holds the audience at arm’s length.

Jedd Jong

LONG LONG TIME AGO

(我们的故事)

Genre: Comedy **Director:** Jack Neo **Cast:** Aileen Tan, Mark Lee, Wang Lei, Suhaimi Yusof, Benjamin Tan, Yan Li Xuan
Run Time: 111 mins **Rating:** PG13 (Brief Nudity) **Opens:** 4 February 2016

RATING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Will wonders never cease? Just when every self-respecting movie-goer in Singapore had written him off as a commercial hack who stopped making *real* films upwards of a decade ago, Jack Neo comes up with something that actually has a plot, and which doesn't immediately shove twenty different product placements up your nose. That said, *Long Long Time Ago's* appeal isn't just restricted to the thank-God-it's-better-than-*The Lion Men* variety: it's a solid, well-assembled film in its own right, with a swashbuckling cast at the top of its game that shows up the Ah Boys (with the probable exception of Wang Weiliang) for the acting lightweights that they are. We dare say even the product placements have undergone a welcome revamp.

Zhao Di (Aileen Tan) is a long-suffering mother of three whose husband's death has forced her to move back in with her parents (Wang Lei and Jing Jing Ah Ma) just when she is about to give birth to her fourth child. This period of great personal turmoil for her just happens to coincide with a period of turmoil in Singapore at large: the days immediately after independence. In a climate rife with uncertainty and superstition, Zhao Di must struggle to bring her children up as best she can, weathering obstacles both individual and national. Over the years, Zhao Di and her family become witnesses to every step of Singapore's growth.

Reading this plot summary, you may well be forgiven for thinking "Meh. Sounds like another melodramatic Channel 8 drama". And you'd be right. There is quite a lot of melodrama in Zhao Di's enduring misfortune and mistreatment at the hands of her superstitious father and all-round *kiam-pah* brother Ah Kun (Mark Lee). But better cloying sentimentality than extended civics and moral education lesson. The nauseating and overly heavy-handed homages to team spirit in Neo's previous three or four movies have been significantly toned down in *Long Long Time Ago*, only making a belated appearance in the movie's last act. After the



testosterone-fuelled *Ah Boys to Men* trilogy, it's also a welcome change to see a woman in the lead role for once. And Bengs and Lians rejoice! Almost the entire film is spoken in Hokkien (or Malay, courtesy of a zany Suhaimi Yusof).

All of this, however, would be barely enough to raise *Long Long Time Ago* into placid mediocrity if not for the cast absolutely slaying with their performances. It's long been established that Aileen Tan can act, but her experience and versatility make all the difference between a real woman and an unrealistic martyr. The erstwhile *Police and Thief* duo of Mark Lee and Suhaimi Yusof, given free rein to mouth off in the respective languages they're most comfortable with, get away with a number of gags that would have fallen flat in the hands of lesser men. The young guns also impress all the more for not having to carry the weight of the film on their shoulders, and viewers should recognize in Zhao Di's eldest daughter the same little lady who drew eyeballs in Neo's segment of *7 Letters* last year (Yan Li Xuan). Neo has finally gotten wise to the folly that is relegating his most experienced cast members to nothing more

than glorified cameos. Several of the Ah Boys do actually make cameos here in a dramatic role reversal (pun fully intended), but these are thankfully brief.

All things said, *Long Long Time Ago* is still a Jack Neo film, featuring humour that frequently borders on the scatological, one or two expensive set pieces and yes, a bunch of product placements. Only this time, you'll laugh more than you cringe, the film's recreation of an attap house under siege from floodwaters isn't a ridiculous dream sequence and it's actually possible to not realise how many product placements Neo has inserted into the film until the list of sponsors rolls during the end credits. Perhaps Singaporeans will indeed have a reason to stream into cinemas for Part 2 in March other than 'it's a Jack Neo movie' after all.

Summary: Nothing new here, but film director Jack Neo makes a long-overdue return after playing second fiddle to commercial director Jack Neo for years on end.

Leslie Wong

THE MONKEY KING 2 (西游记之孙悟空 三打白骨精)

Genre: Action/Fantasy **Director:** Soi Cheang Pou-soi
Cast: Aaron Kwok, Gong Li, Feng Shaofeng, Xiao Shenyang,
Him Law, Kelly Chen, Kris Phillips **Run Time:** 119 mins
Rating: TBA **Opens:** 5 February 2016

RATING ★★☆☆☆

Sun Wukong broke Chinese New Year box office records two years ago in 2014's *The Monkey King*, but in-universe, 500 years have elapsed since he wreaked havoc in the heavens. The deity Guan Yin (Chen) charges Wukong (Kwok) with protecting the monk Tang Sanzang (Feng) on his voyage to retrieve ancient scriptures from a faraway monastery. Wukong is initially reluctant, and finds that he is duty-bound to guard Sanzang, "shackled" by a tiara that grips his head. Along the way, Wukong and Sanzang are joined by Zhu Bajie (Xiaoshenyang), a pig-man with a weakness for beautiful women, and Sha Wujing (Law), a strong, blue-skinned warrior. Sanzang is being pursued by Baiguzing (Gong), a demon who believes that consuming Sanzang's flesh will grant her immortality. Our band of travellers must defeat deception, supernatural threats and overcome their own in-fighting if they're to reach their goal.

Wu Cheng'en's 16th Century classic *Journey to the West* is comprised of 100 chapters. The first seven chapters were the basis for the 2014 film and the titular "journey" begins proper in this sequel. *The Monkey King 2* is an improvement over its predecessor in that while it lacks coherence and trades in overblown bombast, it's nowhere near as cringe-worthy as the 2014 movie. For one thing, the visual effects work has improved and the opening sequence in which Wukong blasts his way out of his mountain prison while fighting a white tiger kicks the film off on the right footing. Because more of the story takes place on an earthly plane than the "Havoc in the Heavens" of the first one, the environments are altogether less phony, with a portion of the film shot on location in New Zealand. Some of the computer-generated creatures and effects are passable if not great, but the horde of reanimated skeletons that Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing must fend off looks like they stepped out of a PlayStation 2 cutscene. It pales in comparison to the similar sequence in *Jason and the Argonauts*, released some 53 years ago.



Kwok played the villainous Bull Demon King in the first film and takes over as Sun Wukong from Donnie Yen. It's slightly odd, like if the new series of *Sherlock* suddenly starred Andrew Scott as Sherlock Holmes. Kwok does a fine job and even though he doesn't have the same martial arts background as Yen, Wukong engages in a whole bunch more fighting in this one. Sammo Hung serves as the action director and for the most part, the wire-fu is neatly executed. Kwok's take on the character is more bearable, mostly because Wukong does less wanton harassment at this point in the story.

Gong has played many a *femme fatale* in her time and calls on those wiles as Baiguzing. It's not an inspired performance by any stretch of the imagination, but it works. This version gives Baiguzing three sexy minions, a bat lady, a snake lady and a hyena lady. They all hang out in a lair which has the same interior designer as Superman's Fortress of Solitude. Similarly, the characterisations of Tang Sanzang, Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing are pretty much how they've been portrayed in decades of film and TV shows. Sanzang is idealistic, well-meaning and naïve to the point of stupidity, Zhu Bajie

is the comic relief and Sha Wujing is the dumb muscle. Sha Wujing is typically portrayed as just a burly dude, but is given more of an otherworldly appearance, with blue skin and bulging muscles.

The Monkey King 2 has its entertaining moments and it doesn't stray too far from the source material, but there's a noticeable lull in the middle and several action sequences go on for too long without sufficiently advancing the plot. The visual effects are surprisingly competent in spots, but a significant lack of polish on the whole is still evident. An emotional sequence at the film's conclusion is melodramatic and there's the sense that this would-be tearful moment is not earned. It's better than the 2014 movie, but then again, most things are.

Summary: *The Monkey King 2* is an improvement on its predecessor and packs in a healthy amount of action, but the quality of the visual effects work is a very mixed bag and it's still quite the mess overall.

Jedd Jong

THE REVENANT

Genre: Adventure/Thriller **Director:** Alejandro González Iñárritu
Cast: Leonardo DiCaprio, Tom Hardy, Domhnall Gleeson, Will Poulter, Forrest Goodluck **Run Time:** 2 hrs 36 mins **Rating:** M18 (Sexual Scene and Violence) **Opens:** 4 February 2016

RATING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



The untamed wilderness has never been wilder and more untamed than in this survival epic. It is 1823 in the uncharted Louisiana Purchase and a party of fur trappers led by Andrew Henry (Gleeson) is hunting for pelts. The group is ambushed by the Arikara Native Americans and many of their number are killed. Hugh Glass (DiCaprio), a hunter familiar with the terrain of the area, recommends a path through the forest

for the survivors to take. John Fitzgerald (Hardy) is antagonistic towards Glass and his half-Pawnee Native American son Hawk (Goodluck). Angry about having to abandon the valuable pelts, Fitzgerald betrays Glass and leaves him for dead after Glass is severely mauled by a bear. Fitzgerald tricks the young trapper Jim

Bridger (Poulter), who has volunteered to stay behind and tend to Glass, into going along with his plan. Glass claws his way out of a shallow grave, navigating the harsh landscape in search of shelter and vengeance against Fitzgerald.

The Revenant is based on Michael Punke's 2002 historical novel of the same name, which in turn drew on the true story of Hugh Glass. *The Revenant* will go down in film history as having one of the most arduous shoots ever, with the crew deeming the production process a "living hell". They had to contend with below-freezing temperatures, director Iñárritu's preference for shooting the film in chronological order and cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki's insistence on only using natural light, be it from the sun or a campfire. In addition, the lack of snow in the Canadian locations resulted in the whole crew picking up

sticks and relocating to Argentina. The shoot went over schedule and Hardy had to drop out of *Suicide Squad* because of it. Defending his decisions and saying he "has nothing to hide," Iñárritu told the *Hollywood Reporter* "If we ended up in greenscreen with coffee and everybody having a good time, everybody will be happy, but most likely the film would be a piece of s***."

So, was all of that worth it? Short answer: yes. *The Revenant* is not a story with particularly inventive twists and turns, but even though most audiences would have a general idea of how the story will progress even without prior knowledge of Hugh Glass, it's very easy to get invested in this yarn. Iñárritu reels the audience in and doesn't let go, one can almost feel the film's grip tighten. Wide panoramas of mountain ridges and roaring rivers are contrasted with extreme tight close-ups of bloodied and bruised characters gritting their teeth. Lubezki serves up beauty without a hint of artificial polish, uncompromising, raw and majestic. Much has been made of the brutal scenarios depicted in the film, but Iñárritu uses the violence such that the audience doesn't get too comfortable in their plush multiplex seats, and he never gleefully revels in the gore the way Tarantino does. The wince-inducing moments are numerous, as impactful as they are bracing.

DiCaprio has yet to win an Oscar. That's the meme that has been run deep into the ground. With all that he's put himself through to play Glass, *The Revenant* might finally be his shot at that coveted golden statuette. He calls it the "hardest performance of his career", and it's easy to see why: the vegetarian actor had to devour a slab of raw bison liver, learn to fire a musket and build a fire and study the Native American languages of Pawnee and Arikara. We've seen heroes who cling to bitter determination against all odds before, but DiCaprio does hammer home the extent of Glass' ordeal.





Hardy is just as good, even stealing the show from DiCaprio on occasion, as Fitzgerald. This reviewer is of the opinion that Hardy is at his best when playing aggressive, villainous characters and his portrayal of the avaricious Fitzgerald is thoroughly authentic. Gleeson is just the right pitch of noble and Poulter looks appropriately out of his element as the greenhorn Bridger. Goodluck and DiCaprio share just enough of a father-son bond, though the relationship isn't as believable as it should be. Arthur RedCloud delivers a truly moving performance as a good Samaritan Pawnee man named Hikuc who aids Glass.

In order to compete with the ready availability of films to watch in various formats at home, movie theatres truck out gimmicks such as 3D, IMAX, Dolby Atmos sound and D-Box motion seats, promising "immersion". While this reviewer is often a sucker for such gimmicks, few cinematic experiences come close to offering the immersion that *The Revenant* does. The film certainly has its shortcomings: at 156 minutes, it is too long, though not egregiously so. It is also ultimately more gruelling than rewarding to sit through and doesn't say anything particularly poignant about the dynamic between Native Americans and the frontiersman who came to mine North America for its natural resources. Taken as a harrowing survival odyssey, *The Revenant* is quite the achievement.



Summary: A primal, riveting tale of high-superhuman perseverance, you'll be rooting for Leonardo DiCaprio and against Tom Hardy while taking in the splendour of the untamed wilderness and wincing at the effectively gory moments.

Jedd Jong

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